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THE NEW YORKER

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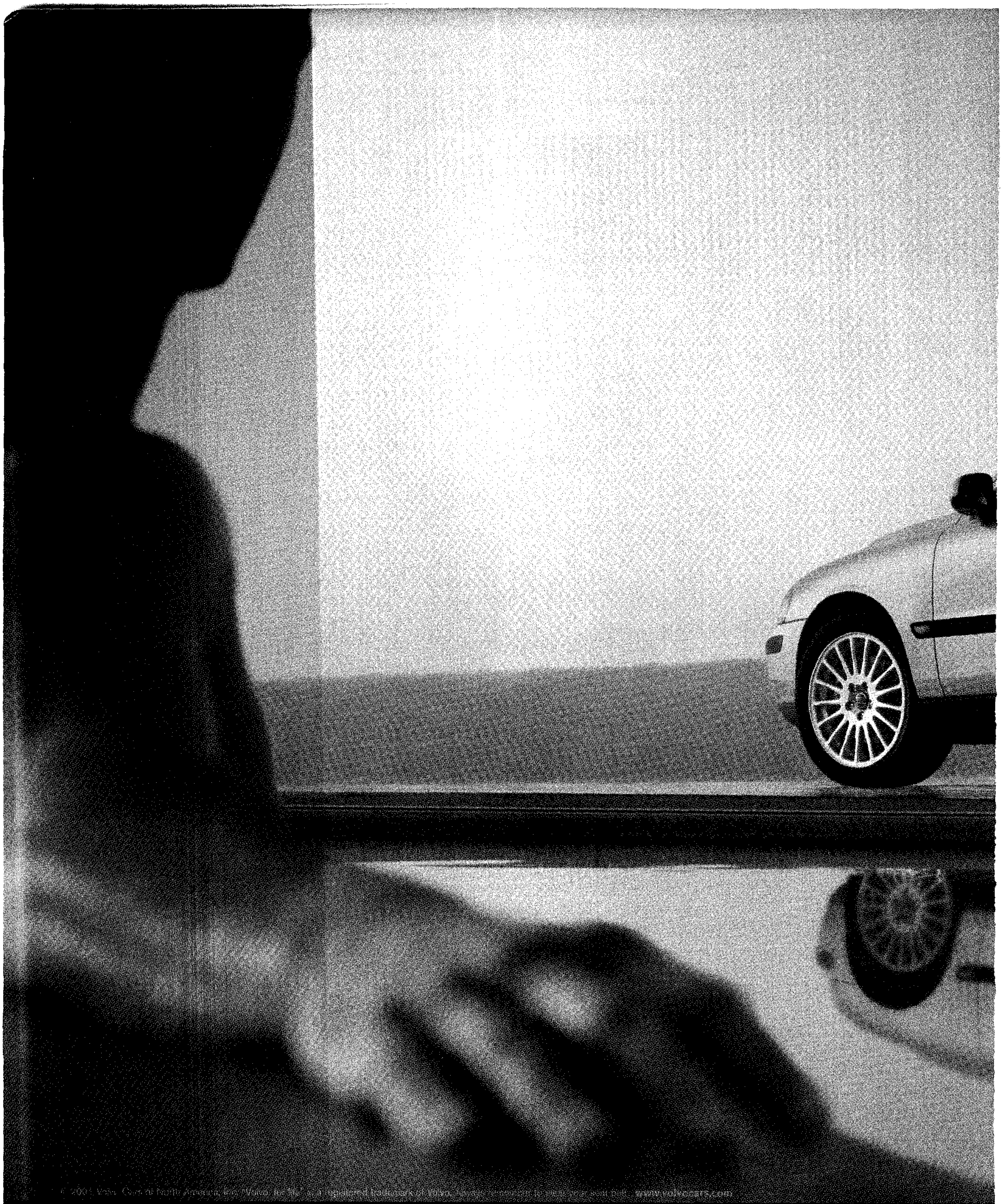

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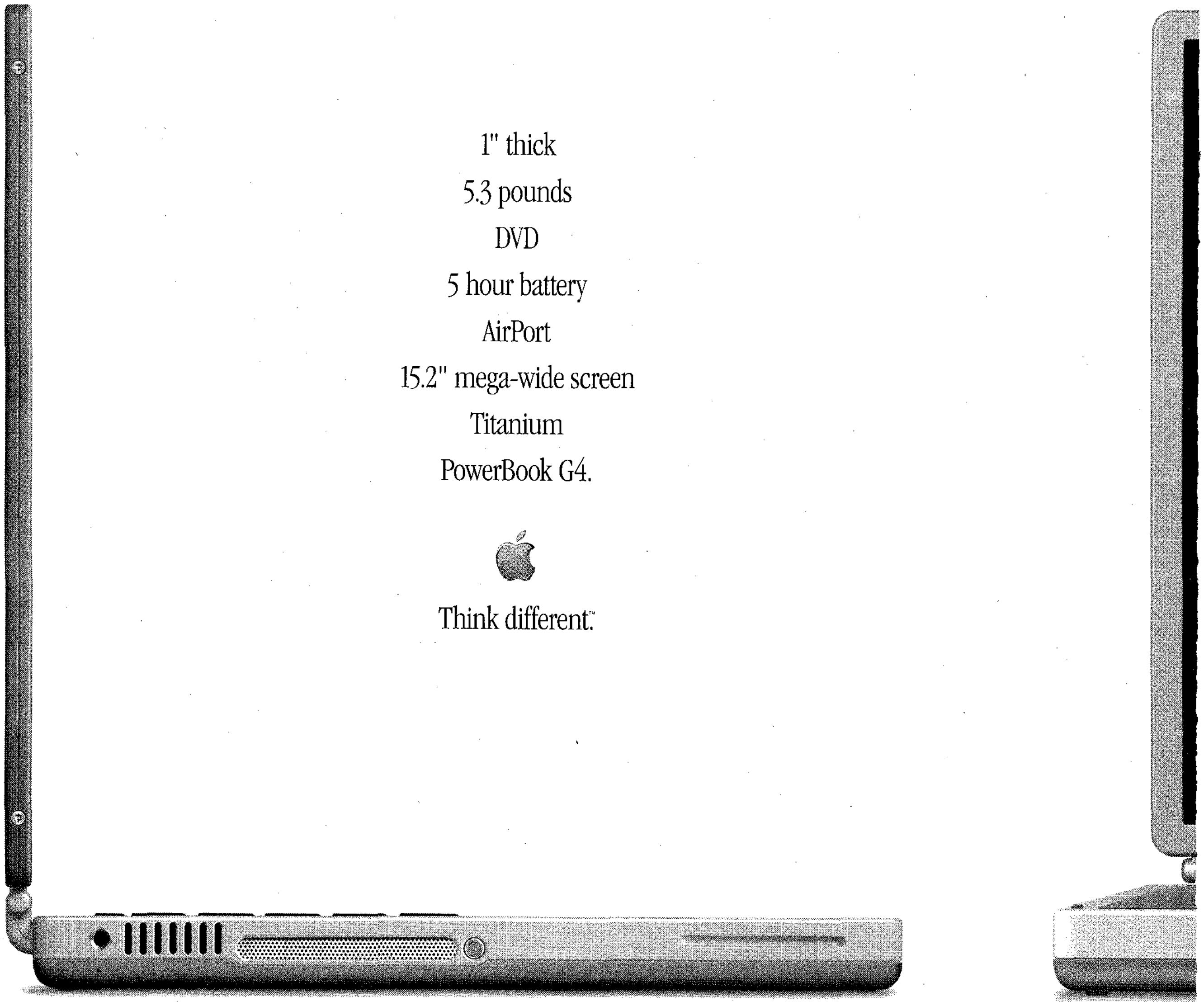
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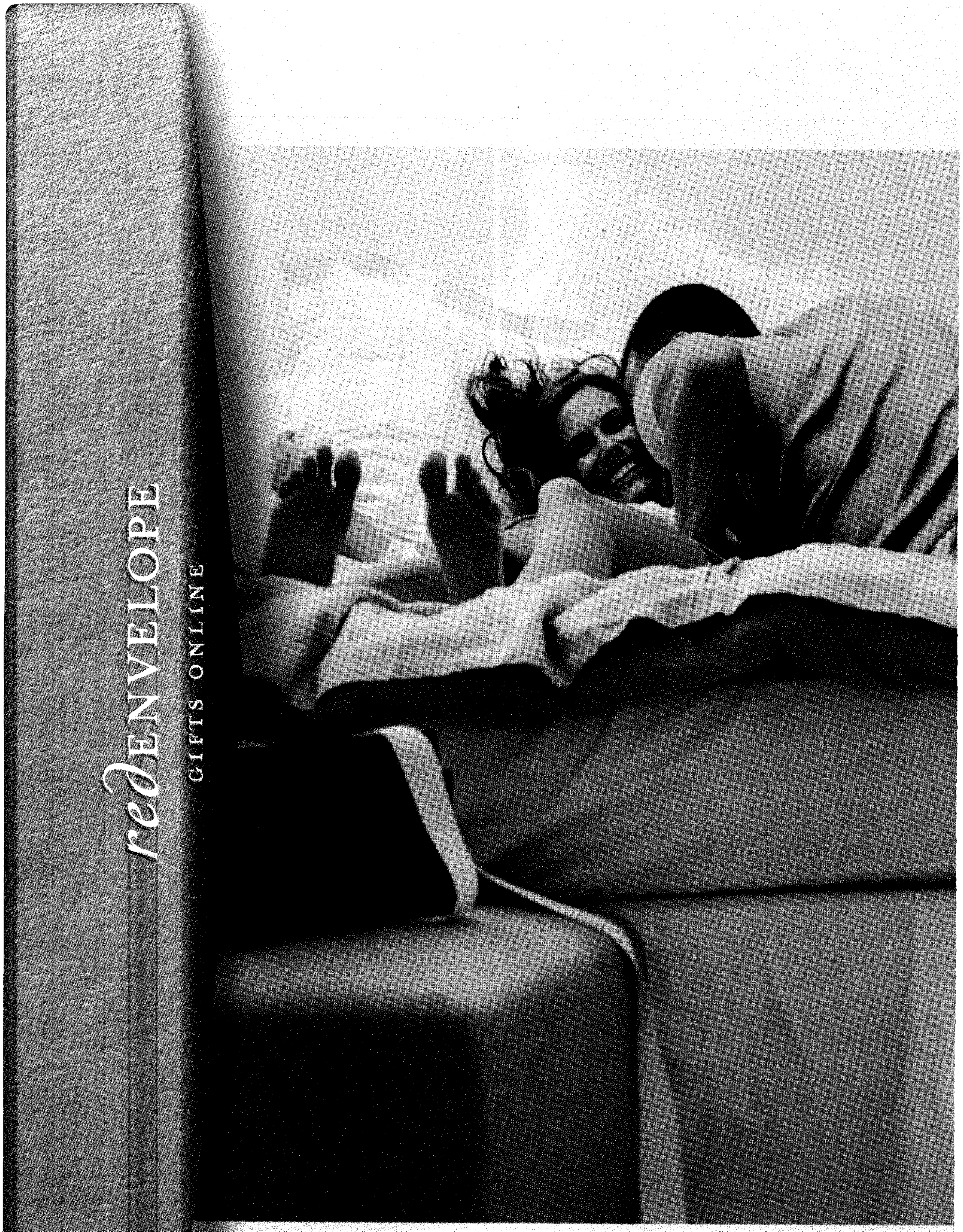
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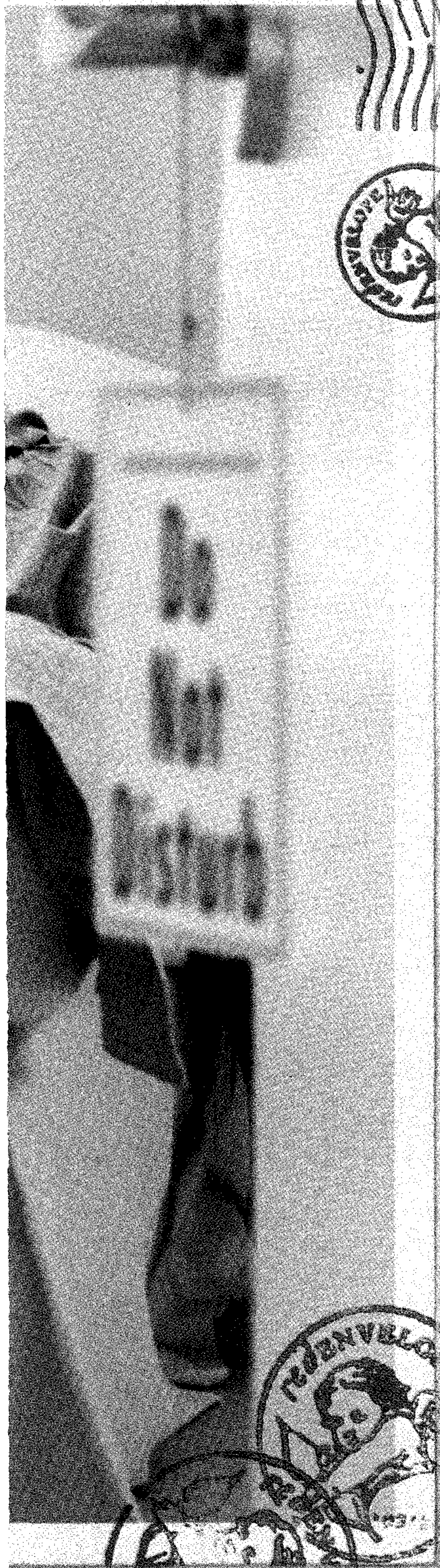
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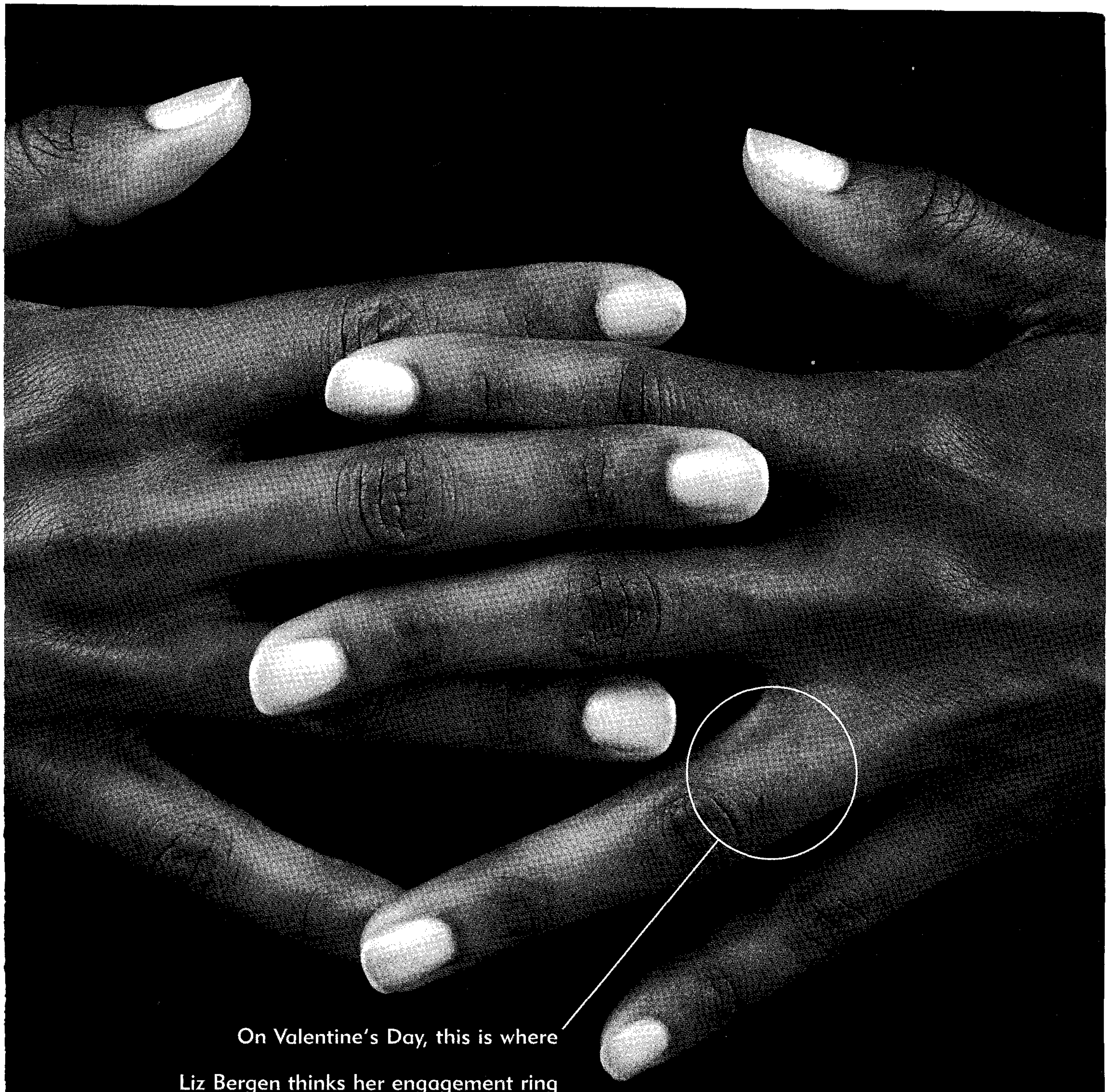

On Valentine's Day, this is where
Liz Bergen thinks her engagement ring
will be. If all goes according to plan.

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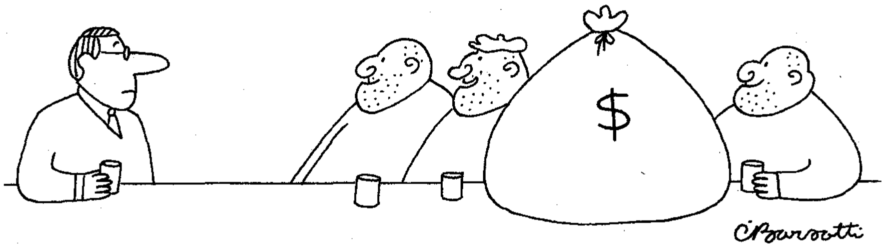

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THE MAIL

RELIGION BEFORE RACE

Hilton Als's suggestion that Flannery O'Connor's "great themes" were "race and faith" is slightly skewed ("This Lonesome Place," January 29th). O'Connor's first and central concern was always faith; she passed all other issues, including race, through that crucible. O'Connor wrote about African-Americans because they were so much a part of her world in Georgia, but she never gave a voice to their experience. Als ascribes the impossibility, as O'Connor saw it, of her meeting with James Baldwin in Georgia in 1959 to the social constraints of the time. It may also have had to do with her resistance to the idea of using race as an overarching theme. As she remarked in a letter some years later, "About the Negroes, the kind I don't like is the philosophizing prophesying pontificating kind, the James Baldwin kind. . . . Baldwin can tell us what it feels like to be a Negro in Harlem but he tries to tell us everything else too." Had they met, they might have "laughed together about their particular 'Christ hauntings,' " as Als would have it, but it is unlikely. While O'Connor's religious characters can be amusing, she would have found nothing funny about that hauntedness itself. The crucified Jesus was too real to her, and too important to her existence.

Margaret Whitt
Associate Professor of English
University of Denver
Denver, Colo.

FIXING COLLEGE GAMES

As co-counsel for the women athletes who successfully sued Brown University for violating Title IX, I take issue with Louis Menand's account of our case in his otherwise fine review of "The Game of Life" (Books, January 22nd). He notes Brown's claim that "it was committed to providing athletic opportunities for any female students who wanted to play, but that the simple fact was that more men than women at Brown elected to play sports every year." He errs, however, in saying that the court rejected this claim because it was "sexist thinking." The court rejected it because it wasn't true. The suit was filed because female students wanted volleyball and gymnastics teams, and Brown was trying to eliminate them. Moreover, the "simple fact" that more men than women "elected" to play sports stemmed directly from Brown's decision to admit more male athletes. As Menand writes, "All college sports [are now] played by students who have been recruited specifically to play them." Brown wanted to avoid recruiting so many women athletes while, at the same time, recruiting many more men. As the court found, that was sex discrimination—plain, simple, and wrong.

Arthur Bryant
Trial Lawyers for Public Justice
Oakland, Calif.

Menand writes about race and athletics in college admissions as though the two were not related. But, at my small liberal-arts college in the mid-nineties, all but one of the black students I met were athletes; almost all played football or basketball. The school would deny it, but the message sent was that the only black students it bothered to recruit were those who passed muster on the playing field. When admissions officers start with fixed ideas about what different groups are good at and can offer, the diversity-in-numbers they achieve may not mean much. People at liberal-arts schools are no more open-minded than those at religious or state colleges; they are probably less so, since the schools' exclusivity, kept up by price tag and academic standards, tends to herd together students of similar backgrounds. Unless they're athletes, of course.

Creede B. Kurtz
Tulsa, Okla.

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

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BOY GETS GIRL
The latest drama by Chicago playwright Rebecca Gilman ("Spinning Into Butter") deals with a journalist whose life is turned upside down after she rejects a blind date. Michael Maggio is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

CELLINI
Reg Rogers portrays the sixteenth-century Florentine sculptor, in a new play by John Patrick Shanley, who is also directing. In previews through Feb. 11. Opens Feb. 12 at 6:30. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE
City Center's Encores! series kicks off its eighth season with a concert staging of the 1927 Rodgers and Hart musical "A Connecticut Yankee," based on Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court." Christine Ebersole, Judy Blazer, and Henry Gibson are in the cast. Five performances only: Feb. 8-9 at 8, Feb. 10 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 11 at 6:30. (131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

EXCUSE ME, I'M TALKING!
Annie Korzen sings, tells stories, and portrays more than forty characters in her solo show about being a Jewish woman in America. In previews through Feb. 10. Opens Feb. 11 at 7. (Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

FOOL FOR LOVE
Sam Shepard's 1983 play, presented by the 29th Street Rep. In previews. (212 W. 29th St. 465-1714.)

FORCE CONTINUUM
A drama about a rookie New York City cop which traces the careers of three generations of black policemen. Written by Kia Corthron. Preview on Feb. 7. Opens Feb. 8 at 8. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

HIGH DIVE
A one-woman comedy about the perils of family vacations, written and performed by Leslie Ayvazian and presented by the MCC Theatre. In previews. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

ISN'T IT ROMANTIC?
The Worth Street Theatre Company's staging of Wendy Wasserstein's 1983 comedy, directed by Jeff Cohen. In previews. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St., at West Broadway. 206-1515.)

RACE
Ferdinand Bruchner's 1933 drama, written during his flight from Austria, about a German medical student who leaves his Jewish girlfriend to join the Nazi Party. Previews begin Feb. 8. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

SEE BOB RUN
Susan O'Connor portrays a talkative hitchhiker, in a revised version of Daniel MacIvor's 1987 drama. In previews. (KGB, 85 E. 4th St. 539-7686.)

A SKULL IN CONNEMARA
The second installment in the Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's Leenane trilogy (which includes "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" and "The Lonesome West"), presented by the Roundabout Theatre Company. Gordon Edelstein is the director. In previews. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

TEN UNKNOWNS
Donald Sutherland stars in Jon Robin Baitz's new drama as a reclusive artist living in Mexico, whose life is disrupted by three unwanted visitors (Julianna Margulies, Denis O'Hare, and Justin Kirk). Daniel Sullivan is the director. Previews begin Feb. 8. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AMERICAN RHAPSODY
KT Sullivan and Mark Nadler star in a musical revue celebrating the works of George Gershwin. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 239-6200.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Chekhov's last play. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Feb. 25.)

COBB
In his brilliantly constructed drama about baseball's greatest hitter and most brutal bully, the playwright Lee Blessing places three actors onstage together to portray Tyrus Raymond Cobb; they reminisce from the afterlife and interact with each other at various stages in Cobb's professional and personal career, during which he sheepishly dodged social injustices and thereby denied himself a chance at true greatness. (Lucille Lortel Theatre, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 11.)

THE CONJURE MAN DIES
Rudolph Fisher's 1932 novel is the basis for this mystery play, in which the body of a Harvard-educated African king and Harlem "psychist" goes missing. Directed by Clinton Turner Davis. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 11.)

THE DEVIL'S MUSIC: THE LIFE AND BLUES OF BESSIE SMITH
Miche Braden stars as the singer in a Melting Pot Theatre Company production of Angelo Parra's play with music. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 279-4200.)

DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE
The Target Margin Theatre's production of Christopher Marlowe's rarely staged circa-1593 play, directed by David Herskovits. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 358-3657. Closes Feb. 24.)

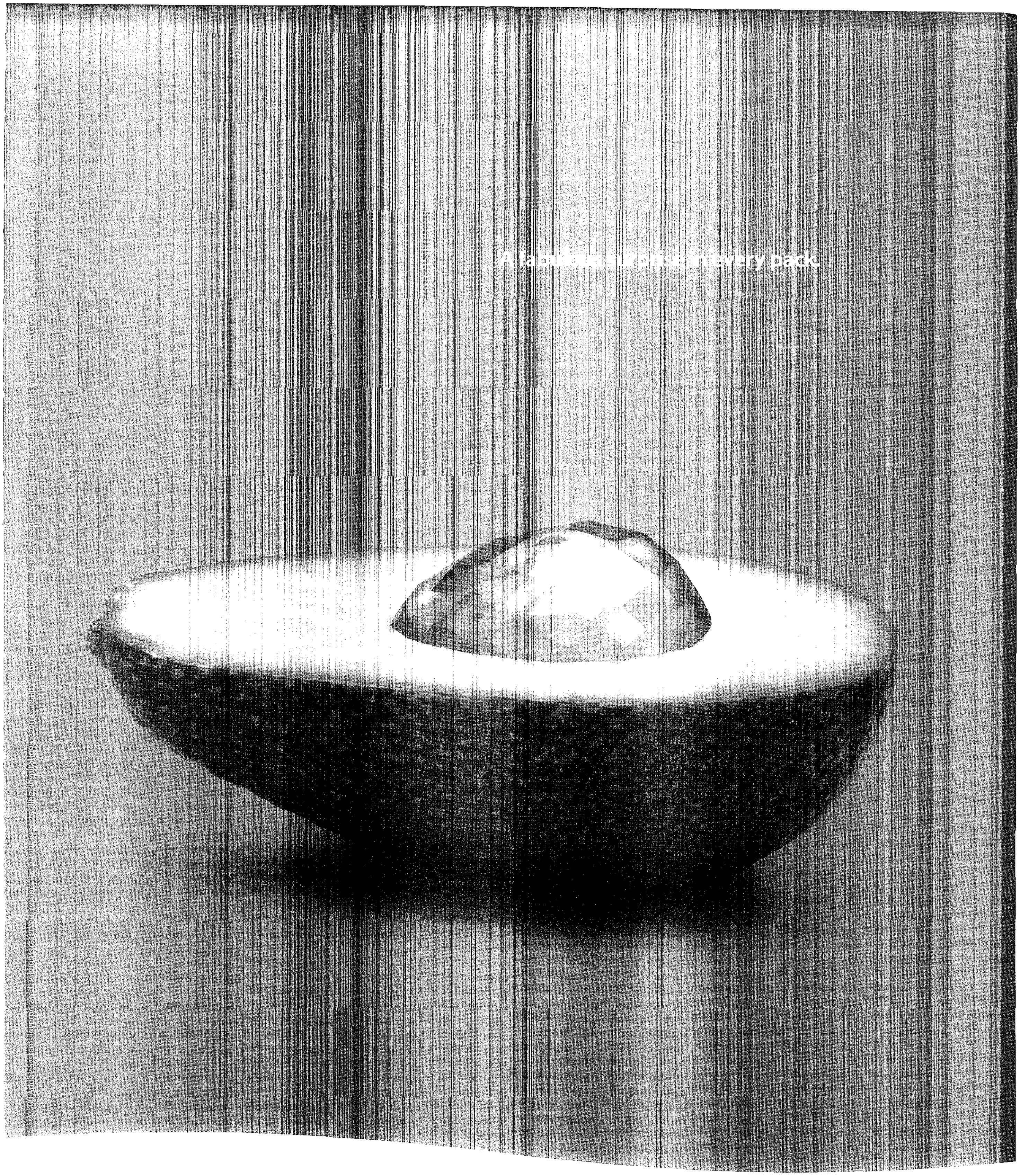
THE DINNER PARTY
Neil Simon's new comedy is set in an opulent restaurant in Paris, and his six characters—three divorced couples—are not the usual Simon-Americans of his "Suite" plays. They are French, or are meant to be. Still, the play is essentially traditional fare; the running, or limping, gags are in ready supply, and the secondhand shtick, often in the form of aeons-old alimony jokes, flows freely along this Boulevard of Broken Marriages. (11/6/00) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

END OF THE WORLD PARTY
A comedy by Chuck Ranberg, about a group of men who rent a Fire Island house together each year. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
These days, ridiculing Broadway is like shooting fish in a barrel, so it's amazing that the latest version of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running satirical revue manages to fire off as many good ones as it does. Alessandrini can always be counted on for a smart laugh, but not all of the numbers here are up to his usual high standards of comic cruelty; it's partly because the ensemble as a whole is not as adept at impersonations as casts of the past, and partly because none of the new crop of Broadway stars are large enough to lend themselves to caricature. Thank goodness the wonderful Christine Pedi is still in the show; her loopy, loving imitations of yesteryear's biggies—Elaine Stritch, Liza Minnelli, Ethel Merman, and Barbra Streisand—are more than worth the trip and the price of a ticket. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

FOUR GUYS NAMED JOSÉ . . . AND UNA MUJER NAMED MARIA
This crowd-pleasing, crayon-colored revue of Latin song and dance is knowingly broad and hammy. But the talented cast sends up the singers and songs that helped create Latin stereotypes and delivers the remaining material—dance songs, songs of nostalgia for one's homeland, songs of love, songs about women named Maria—with exuberant wit and affection. (Blue Angel, 323 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE FULL MONTY
The musical version of the 1997 movie, about a group of unemployed factory workers who try to



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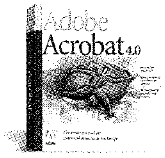

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earn some cash by stripping, has all the spirit and charm of the original but, as befits a Broadway production, on a much larger, pizzazzier scale. Early on, Terrence McNally's book and David Yazbek's songs strike notes of class consciousness and unemployment-related low male self-esteem a little too hard, but soon enough the show's winning good humor and inventiveness kick in, and if you don't find yourself laughing consistently (and tearing up occasionally), well, then, maybe you don't *deserve* to see six men prancing around in red G-strings. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

HYMN TO THE RISING SUN
La Mama's celebration of Black History Month continues with a staging of Paul Green's 1936 drama about convicts on a North Carolina chain gang, directed by Barbara Montgomery. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes Feb. 18.)

AN IDIOT DIVINE
With an assortment of musical instruments and his own otherworldly voice, Rinde Eckert channels two "edjits." The first is a murderer doing time in prison, who teaches himself how to play the accordion and dowse for water. The second is harder to pin down: he speaks with a brogue, dresses like an Indian guru, plays a horn, a guitar, and various bells and whistles beautifully, and discourses amusingly on the individual personalities of his five fingers. With these talents, and his ability to perform one-man duets, Eckert elevates incoherence to a poignant clarity. Directed by Ellen McLaughlin. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100. Closes Feb. 18.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OSCAR
The Irish actor Nial Buggy stars as Oscar Wilde, in Micheál MacLiammóir's one-man portrait of the playwright. Directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

JANE EYRE
John Caird and Paul Gordon's musical is respectful of and faithful to Brontë's original, but it needs to be brilliant and piercing, and it isn't. Though the show's book is a fair job, the music is schmaltzy, and the modern stage devices—the endless projections of trees and sky may make you feel like you're watching the Weather Channel—don't quite bring Brontë to life. The appealing cast is led by Marla Schaffel, who is the very picture of the Jane Eyre in your mind's eye. Directed by Mr. Caird and Scott Schwartz. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

KILLERS AND OTHER FAMILY
Rattlestick Productions presents a play by Lucy Thurber, about a woman whose past catches up with her. (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 206-1515. Closes Feb. 18.)

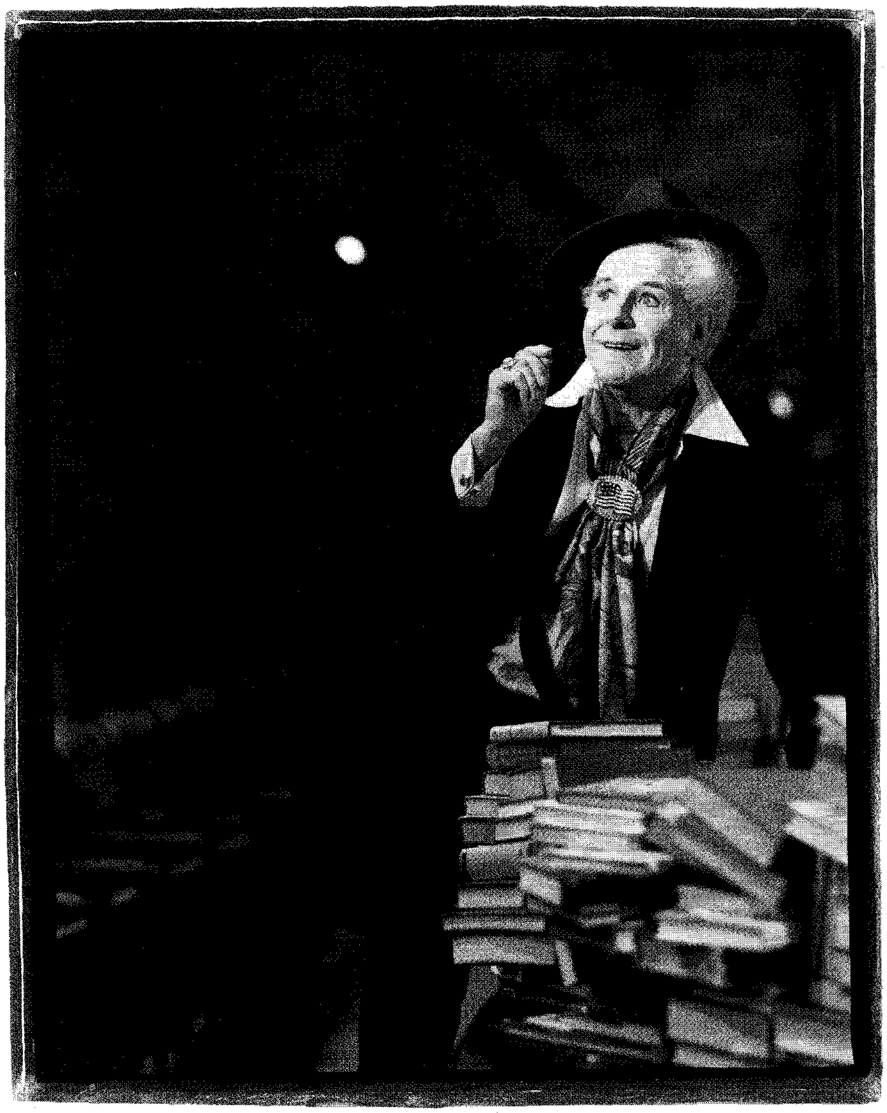
KRISIT
Hollywood is the setting for Y York's comedy about plastic surgery, which stars Scotty Bloch and Larry Pine. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes Feb. 18.)

LIVING IN THE WIND
Sally Stewart-Coleman and David Damane portray married ex-slaves trying to rebuild their lives after the Civil War, in a romantic drama by Michael Bradford. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES
From the Bat Theatre Company, a staging of O'Neill's 1917 play, set on the steamer Glencairn, anchored off the West Indies. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051. Closes Feb. 24.)

MORE LIES ABOUT JERZY
Davey Holmes's play may be based on the actual events surrounding the life and death of Jerzy Kosinski, but its tendency to slip into melodrama prevents this production from achieving anything close to real resonance. Jared Harris stars as the writer, the facts of whose Holocaust memoir are in doubt; Daniel London is the journalist desperate to expose the truth; and Gretchen Egolf is the fact checker who comes between them. Holmes makes the point, over and over, that you can never tell who anybody really is. Ironically, the characters are transparent, and Darko Tresnjak's sluggish direction doesn't supply them with any nuance. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303. Closes Feb. 11.)

NOW THAT COMMUNISM IS DEAD, MY LIFE FEELS EMPTY
Richard Foreman's forty-eighth play, in which two ex-radicals (Tony Torn and Jay Smith) look for meaning in the new millennium. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)



MICHAEL JAMES O'BRIEN

Betty Bourne as Quentin Crisp, in "Resident Alien," at New York Theatre Workshop.

PARADISE ISLAND
Benjie Aerenson's decidedly unparadisaical play, in which a diabetic young woman (Adrienne Shelley) and her overconcerned mother (Lynn Cohen) visit a Bahamas resort to play the slots and "just relax" together. Most of their interactions involve the mother nagging the daughter, and the daughter nagging the mother about nagging so much. Aerenson probably meant for his characters' fraught exchanges to reveal something about how they both got so annoying, but his intentions fail. The actresses, however, do fine jobs with their limited roles. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 11.)

PETE 'N' KEELY
A pair of singing stars, formerly a married duo, are reunited on a television variety show in 1968, in a musical comedy by James Hindman. With sets by Ray Klausen and costumes by Bob Mackie. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY
Marian Seldes and Brian Murray portray a mysterious older couple who convince a pair of new parents that their baby was never born, in a new play by Edward Albee. David Esbjornson is the director. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

PROOF
The young playwright David Auburn's drama about the possible link between genius and mental illness stars Mary-Louise Parker as the daughter of a brilliant but unstable University of Chicago mathematician. Parker's character appears to have similar gifts and, possibly, similar troubles, and Parker skillfully and believably delivers the smart and sullen, insolent and indolent goods. Auburn has real depth and a real voice, and he has taken on some biggies here, but in the end you wish the play were a little richer, a little less simply resolved. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

RESIDENT ALIEN
Bette Bourne portrays Quentin Crisp in Tim Fountain's play about the life and work of the late East Village writer. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Feb. 25.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
Rather than a revival of Richard O'Brien's 1973 musical, a glam tribute to fifties horror flicks, Christopher Ashley's production is an unsexy and oddly earnest homage to the 1975 cult-movie adaptation. The only air of self-parody comes from the impish Dick Cavett, who, as the narrator, gives the show a shot of vitality with his improvised standup shtick. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE
Lily Tomlin is back on Broadway in the one-woman, thirteen-character show written for her by her longtime collaborator, Jane Wagner, and what's not to love about that? Tomlin is terrific—moving, funny, and as lithe and vibrant as she was when she first performed the show here, fifteen years ago. This is a chance to see a remarkable life force in action. (11/27/00) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SEUSSICAL
For all the whimsy of Theodor Geisel's doggerel, what's missing in this relentlessly cute musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty is mayhem and magic. The music and lyrics are generic, the costumes are unimaginative, the choreography and direction are winded. With the exception of one gentle and winning performance—by Kevin Chamberlin as Horton the Elephant, who gets conned into hatching an egg—it's a show with curiously little charm. (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

SHAKESPEARE'S VILLAINS: A MASTERCLASS IN EVIL
In his one-man show, Steven Berkoff discusses and performs various villain roles from the Shakespearean canon. His long-winded digressions are more distracting than entertaining, but his transformations are extraordinarily nimble (particularly his Richard III and his Macbeth), and his insightful analysis of performance technique and text celebrates both the wonders of Shakespeare and the wonders of theatregoing itself. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 11.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring South African native and first-time playwright Pamela Gien, who gives an extraordinary performance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa, which begins in 1965 and continues through the following twenty years of turbulent and violent upheavals over apartheid. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst, staged by Manhattan Theatre Club, has moved to Broadway. Linda Lavin, Tony Roberts, and Michele Lee star. Lynne Meadow is the director. (3/20/00) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

THEATRE OF LIGHT
Lights, paintings, movement, and music from Rudi Stern, the "light artist" whose designs in the nineteen-sixties accompanied Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Celebrations and concerts by the Doors. (Flamboyan Theatre, Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., between Delancey and Rivington Sts. 279-4200.)

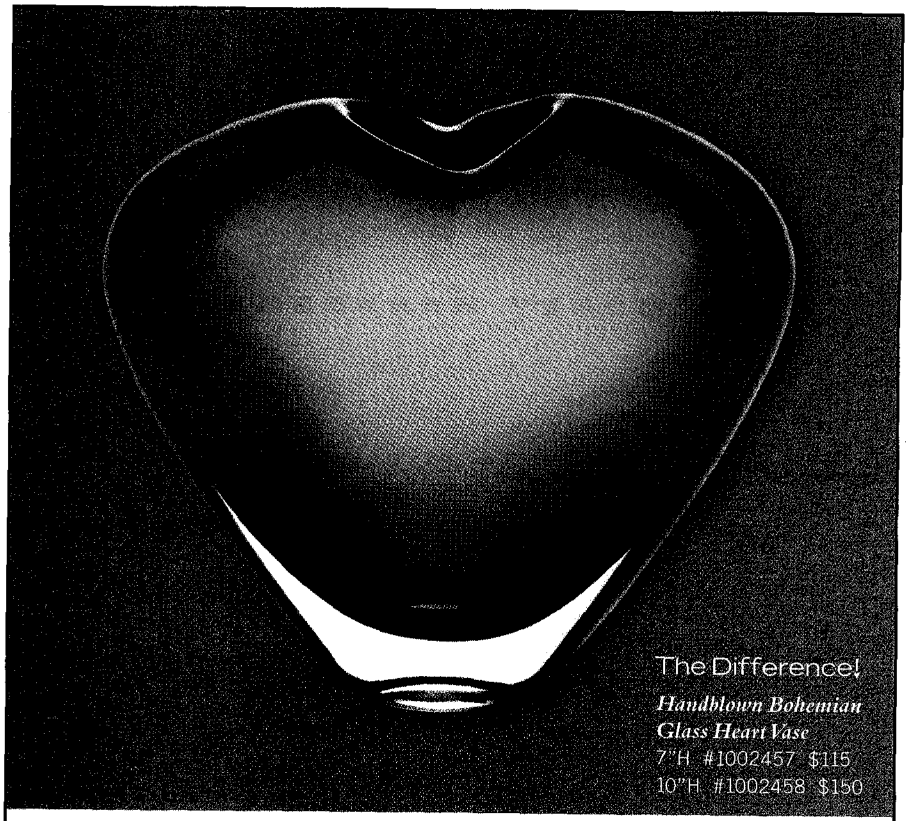
THREE SECONDS IN THE KEY
In her latest performance piece, Deb Margolin recounts her fight with Hodgkin's disease, which she and her son coped with by immersing themselves in professional basketball. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

TIME AND AGAIN
Jack Finney's 1970 novel about a New Yorker who travels through time is the basis for a new musical by Walter Edgar Kennon (score) and Jack Viertel (book). Susan H. Schulman is the director. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Feb. 7 at 8: "Fearful Symmetries," "Davidsbündlertänze," and "Brandenburg." ♦ Feb. 8 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Davidsbündlertänze," and "Mercurial Manoeuvres." ♦ Feb. 9 at 8: "Prodigal Son," "Dances at a Gathering," and "Fearful Symmetries." ♦ Feb. 10 at 2: "Concerto Barocco," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," and "Prodigal Son." ♦ Feb. 10 at 8: "Allegro Brillante," "Prodigal Son," and "Brandenburg." ♦ Feb. 11 at 3: Divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "Sonatas and Interludes," "In the Night," and "The Beethoven Seventh." ♦ Feb. 13 at 8: "Chaconne," "Stabat Mater," and "Brandenburg." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. Through Feb. 25.)

MOMIX
Moses Pendleton's first piece of choreography was a one-legged number inspired by the stumpy stage antics of Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson at the Fillmore West. In that same year, 1969, Pendleton attended parties of the Bay Area branch of the Sexual Freedom League, naked. "You made love to someone before you got to know their name," he says. "It would



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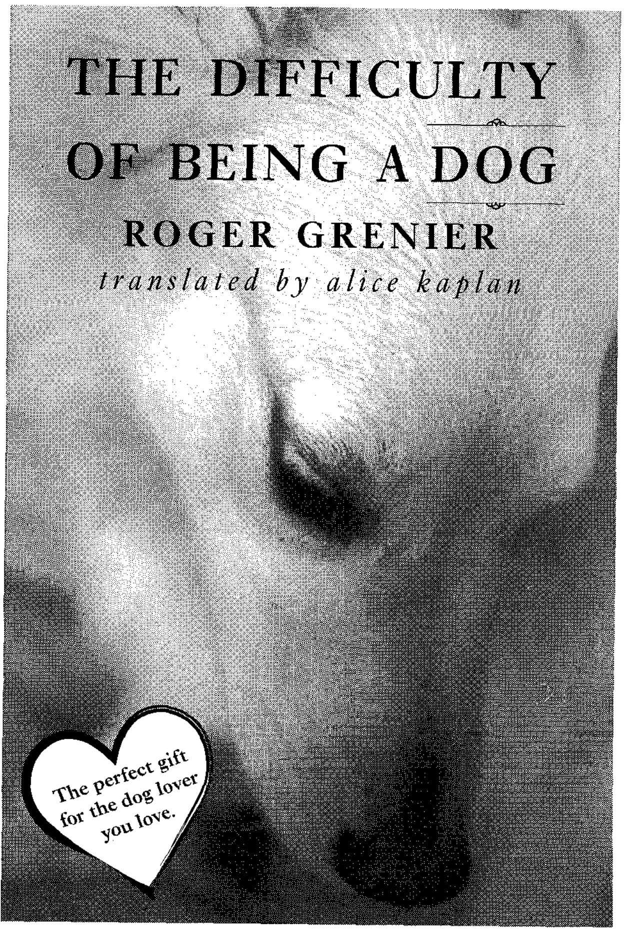
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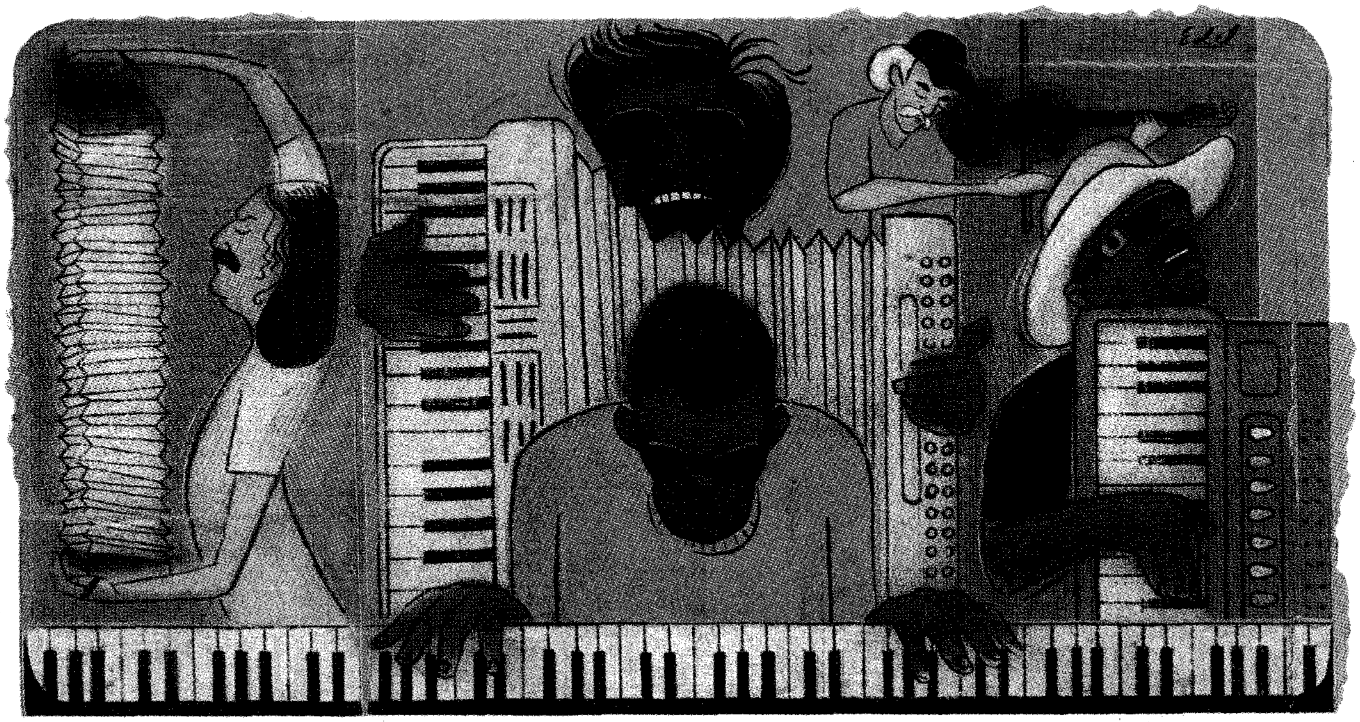
have been considered rude not to." The fantasias the gallant choreographer has created since owe a great deal to these early experiments. In his often comic-erotic creations—first for the dance collective Pilobolus, which he helped found in 1971, and since 1980 for his troupe Momix—multi-scaled props in motion make the ecstatic and acrobatic athletes appear to shrink and grow. When the frequently nude performers cleave to one another, what emerges is an unnameable creature with several butts and no head, or a Shiva shimmering his many arms. The remaining programs alternate between short works, a première ("Opus Cactus"), and 1991's acclaimed "Passion." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Feb. 6-9 and Feb. 13 at 8, Feb. 10 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 11 at 2 and 7:30. Through Feb. 18.)



PARTY TIME *In advance of Mardi Gras, an intoxicating combination of Louisianan musicians is in town this week. Clockwise from the left are the accordionist Terrance Simien; the veteran showman Buckwheat Zydeco; the fiddler Michael Doucet, of BeauSoleil; the zydeco champion Nathan Williams, of Nathan and the Zydeco Cha Chas; and the pianist Henry Butler.*

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

"CARAVANE"
Urban Tap, a collective of dancers and musicians organized and inspired by the exceptionally quick-footed Herbin (Tamango) Van Cayseele, offers diverse entertainment by tappers, a capoeira specialist, a stilt stomper, and others, accompanied by music from African drummers, an Italian trumpeter, a rapper, and a d.j. (The New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Feb. 9 at 7, Feb. 10 at 2 and 7, and Feb. 11 at noon and 5. Through Feb. 25.)

"THE FEATS"
Kraig Patterson's new dances have little themes behind them: the militarist underpinnings of the relentlessly placid fifties, for example, or the night life of wetland salamanders. But the drama is drawn from the music—here, Stravinsky, Glass, Britten, and Björk. The former Mark Morris dancer sets his young company moving in large kaleidoscopic patterns or small complementary clusters. The full-bodied movement is quirky, occasionally betutued, and always touched by an uncloying sweetness. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Feb. 8-11 at 8:30.)

"TALKING DANCE"
Anne Iobst and Lucy Sexton, of Dancenoise, host an evening of works that combine dance and chatter. The two-week series closes with a program featuring current practitioners of the form: Katie Duck, Elevator Repair Service, Foofwa d'Imobilité (the former Merce Cunningham dancer once known as Frederic Gafner), Miguel Gutierrez, Sarah Michelson, Cynthia Oliver, and Jamie Sneider. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Feb. 7-10 at 8.)

"JILL IN BRAZIL/THE ORCHID SHOW"
The choreographer Neta Pulvermacher reprises her evening-length work about a soap-opera star vacationing in a swamp whose whimsical inhabitants, both human and orchid, tell lively stories sprinkled with obscure facts. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. Feb. 10-11 at 3.)

"THE REFLECTING SKIN"
The former José Limón dancer Kevin Wynn and his fifteen-member troupe present a full-length work that the choreographer describes as "a nonlinear hallucinogenic portrait of an extended family." (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 625-8369. Feb. 9 at 9 and Feb. 10-11 at 8.)

"DRAGON'S TALE"
To celebrate the Chinese New Year, the Nai-Ni Chen dance company performs modern interpretations of such traditional rituals and dances as the lion dance, the fan dance, and the chopstick dance. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Feb. 9 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

"LOSER'S LOUNGE"
One of the more bizarre images at the close of last year was the photograph in the *Times* of a bedraggled Bryan Ferry keeping close watch over a Kenyan terrorist who was bound and laid out in the aisle of the British Airways jet he'd just tried to hijack. Even stranger than the sight of the suave crooner caught with his hair mussed is the prospect of the songs he created for Roxy Music getting radically reimagined (in simultaneous honor and mockery) by the Loser's Lounge founder and keyboardist Joe McGinty and his marvellously malleable band the Kustard Kings. An all-star lineup of downtown singers will lend vocal support. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Feb. 7-8 at 8 and Feb. 9-10 at 9.)

"BALKAN CABARET"
The Romanian-born singer Sanda Weigl is a distant relative of Bertolt Brecht and an inheritor of the Brecht/Weill theatrical and musical tradition. Weigl and her family fled Bucharest for East Berlin in 1961 and arrived five days before the Berlin Wall was erected. She recorded her first album in 1966, but her promising career was quickly suppressed by a Communist regime that disapproved of her outspoken political beliefs. Although she was banned from singing in public, she defied the government and was imprisoned for protesting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Here, Weigl, backed by a sharp band that includes the pianist Anthony Coleman, the bassist Brad Jones, and the accordionist Ted Reichman, will sing Romanian Gypsy songs that she learned on the streets of Bucharest in her youth. (Exit Art, 548 Broadway, between Prince and Spring. 966-7745. Feb. 9 at 8.)

MANOLO SANLÚCAR
A highly promising concert of flamenco music, featuring the brilliant Spanish guitarist and the vocalist Carmen Linares. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Feb. 10 at 8.)

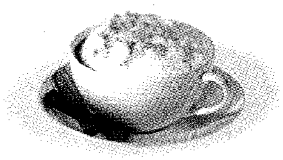
TERRANCE SIMIEN
The energetic Louisianan accordionist presents a children's concert. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Feb. 10 at 11 A.M.)

NATHAN & THE ZYDECO CHA-CHAS
The accordionist Nathan Williams named his group for a song by the late zydeco monarch Clifton Chenier, but Williams is no nostalgic traditionalist. His band mixes R. & B. influences into its musical stew (they once recorded a French version of Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely"), and the result is some of the best dance music around. Dance lessons are offered an hour before the show. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, between 12th and 13th Sts. For more information, call 685-7597. Feb. 11 at 7.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Feb. 9-11: **Mary Wilson** carries on the legacy of the Supremes. Feb. 13: **BeauSoleil Avec Michael Doucet.** When a question arises in southwestern Louisiana about



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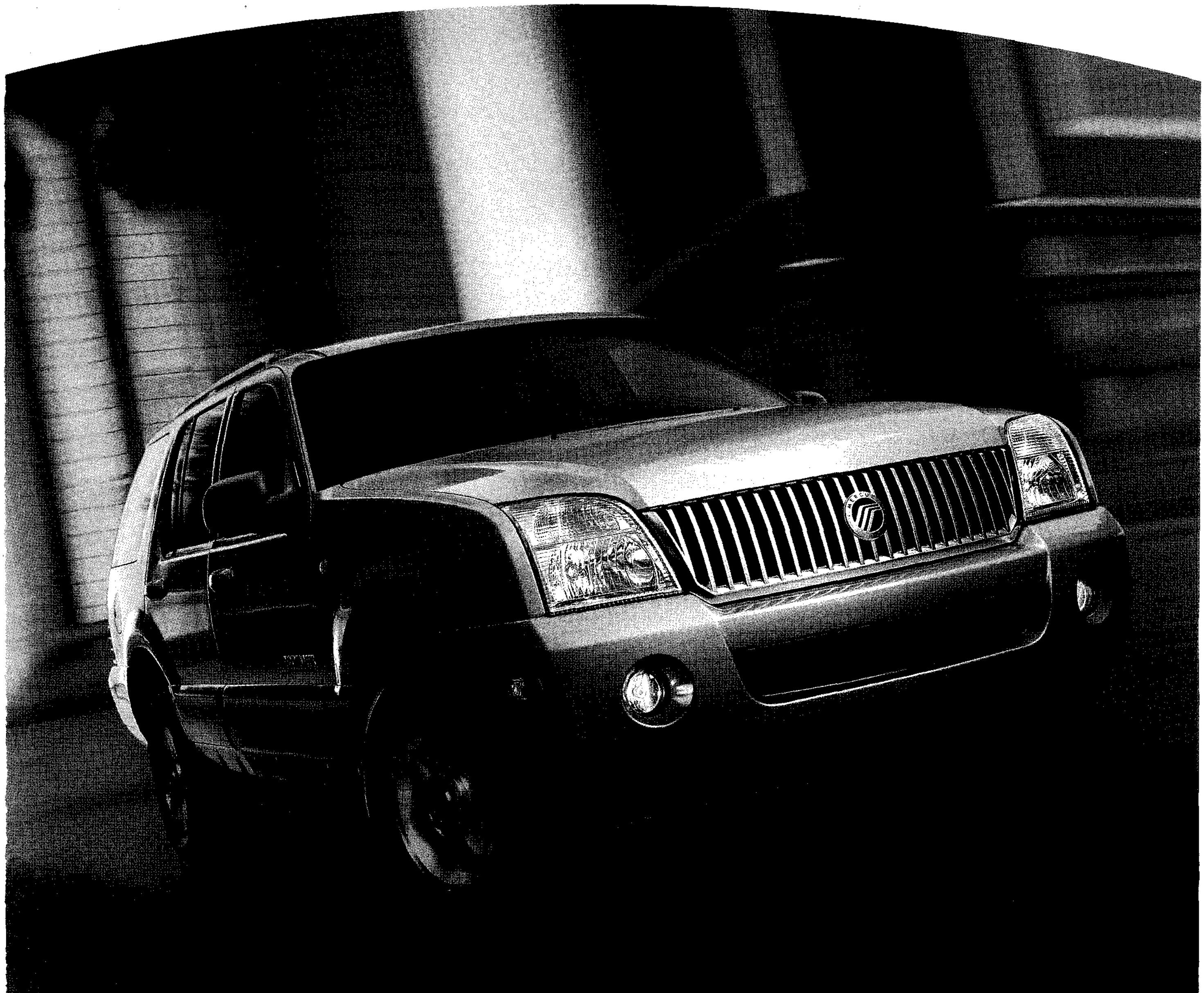

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how to cook a particular dish, the answer always seems to start with, "Throw shrimp or crawfish on it and take it from there." The Cajun fiddler Doucet and his band approach music with a similar philosophy, only instead of shellfish, they heap accordion licks and French lyrics on everything in sight. It's the way these folks have kept their musical culture alive for the past twenty-five years.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Feb. 9: At the end of the past decade, Curt Kirkwood, the eccentric guitarist and co-founder of the seminal punk band the **Meat Puppets**, moved from his native Arizona to Austin, Texas, following the near self-destruction from drug abuse of his brother and bandmate Cris and the death of his mother. On the run from his troubles, he assembled a new version of the Puppets (without his brother) and released "Golden Lies," the band's first studio album in five years. Early reports from the road indicate that Kirkwood and his new friends are in vintage form. Feb. 10: The streets of Caracas, Venezuela, are full of big old American cars from the seventies and the plush back seat of a '77 Chrysler Cordoba comes to mind when you hear the groovy sounds of the Venezuelan dance band **Los Amigos Invisibles.** Their latest disk, "Arepa 3000," will make you shake your hips and smile from ear to ear.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S.
73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Feb. 10: The blind New Orleans pianist **Henry Butler** is something of a legend in his home city, where he's a ubiquitous performer. Butler is also a private music instructor and if his skill as a teacher is anything like his talent as an improviser he has some lucky students. Butler commands the keyboards with a sense of flair and a rolling aggression that are a rare combination. Sign up for a serious lesson in piano-playing the Crescent City way.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Feb. 10: The forty-nine-year-old Brazilian guitarist **Vinicius Cantuária** spent the early part of his career writing songs for such compatriot superstars as Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa. For the past six years, though, he's lived in New York City, rubbing elbows with a radical set of musicians, including Bill Frisell, Arto Lindsay, David Byrne, and Laurie Anderson. Cantuária seeks out such company in order to expand the range of his bossa nova, and his subtly adventurous take on the music can be heard on his last release, "Tucumã," which featured contributions by many of his new friends. Here, Cantuária can be expected to play songs from his forthcoming album, "Vinicius," a collection of frequently languid tunes in which his gentle guitar and soft, shuffling delivery create a dreamy soundscape.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Feb. 8: **Buckwheat Zydeco.** Stanley (Buckwheat) Dural, Jr., a leading ambassador of zydeco music, is a true party professional. Seasoned by decades of touring, Buckwheat and his backup musicians know how to make even the most uptight New York crowd dance. Keep your eye on the washboard player. Feb. 9-11: **Evan Dando,** perhaps pop's handsomest singer-songwriter, returns with an acoustic show of covers and songs from his old band the Lemonheads.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Feb. 9-10: **Idris Muhammad** swings—hard. This New Orleans-bred drummer has been levitating the bandstand since the sixties; once a paragon of funk jazz, he now works with such modernists as the saxophonist Joe Lovano. A trio will be a compact showcase for this master percussionist. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Though she's at an age when, for many, retirement looms like sweet fruit, **Abbey Lincoln** (here with her quartet through Feb. 11) continues to bloom. Her latest release, "Over the Years," finds Lincoln sing-

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Word Is Bond

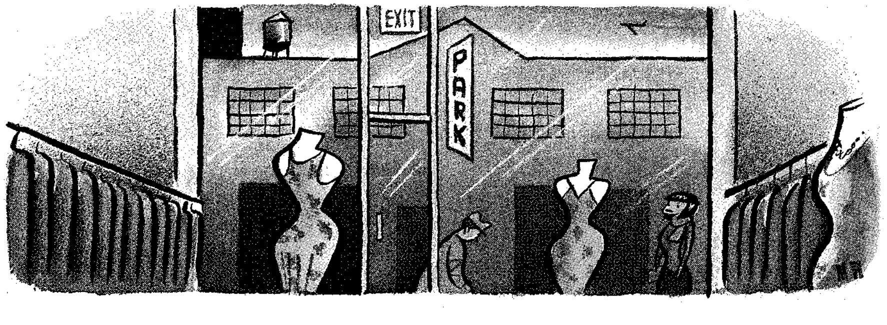
The last time Manhattan's Bond Street was fashionable, around a hundred and eighty years ago, No. 42—now the site of Etna Tool and Dye—was the home of the Parisian émigré Mlle. Evelyn Claudine de Saint-Évremond's bordello, a house whose employees were so cultivated that many of them were said to have found wealthy husbands from among the clientele. Though twenty-first-century Bond Street, which consists of two rough-around-the-edges brick blocks between Broadway and the Bowery, has yet to boast a similar establishment, it's no longer the exclusive province of scrap-metal dealers and gas stations. In the very recent past, a number of rather more giddy enterprises have arrived, among them a Japanese restaurant that has shown up frequently on the *Post's* Page Six, a fancy art-supply store, a clothing shop called Bond 07 which specializes in such items as cat's-eye spectacles and vintage Gucci purses, and Peter-Roberts Antiques, where a circa-1900 L. & J.G. Stickley Morris chair with its original leather seat sells for $22,000.

"Bond Street could use a kick and a kiss," says the fellow behind the counter at **PETER-ROBERTS** (No. 39; 477-9690), hopeful that customers will come to appreciate the neighborhood's raffish charms. The store, newly relocated from Spring Street, offers a museum-quality collection of American Arts and Crafts furniture so comprehensive that there's even a signed Charles Limberts high chair ($2,500). Though most of the inventory is authentic, some exquisite reproductions have been allowed in, including a custom-made cabinet for a twenty-six-inch TV, an item the Stickleys could barely have imagined ($3,200). "I thought of moving to Tribeca," says Robert Melita, the owner, who fell for this furniture when he was knocking around country auctions in the early eighties. "But I like this block."

Not everything on Bond Street is as time-tested as an Arts and Crafts easy chair. At **GHOST** (No. 28; 646-602-2891), a stone's throw from the Quik Park, slouchy English clothes hug the edges of a white room whose starkness is only partly relieved by a pair of etched mirrors big enough for a mansion, a low leather couch, and a bevy of bright garments. A burnt-orange velvet coat with a high, ruched collar which recalls the sort of bed jacket Jean Harlow wore when she plucked her eyebrows is $580.

Perhaps the least likely new denizen on the block is **CREED** (No. 9; 228-1732), an Anglo-French perfumery that would be right at home on that other Bond Street. The shop has colonized nine thousand square feet in a cast-iron building, parked a Creedmobile fitted with fragrance testers on the street outside, and installed goofy fake flora, a glass dinner table laden with atomizers, and several dozen chairs whose cushions sport silk-screened portraits of celebrity patrons. The firm has been in business since 1760, and the current scion is Olivier Creed, who is also the resident "nose." For $20,000, the company will fly you to Paris, put you up at the Plaza Athénée, and arrange for M. Creed to create a perfume especially for you. Short of that, you can settle for something already on tap; the vast array of fragrances includes Fleurissimo, created for Grace Kelly's nuptials, and Green Irish Tweed, made for Cary Grant but also favored by Elvis Presley ($70 per ounce). Though the shop certainly isn't saying so, it's not impossible that Mlle. de Saint-Évremond was once a customer as well.

—*Lynn Yaeger*



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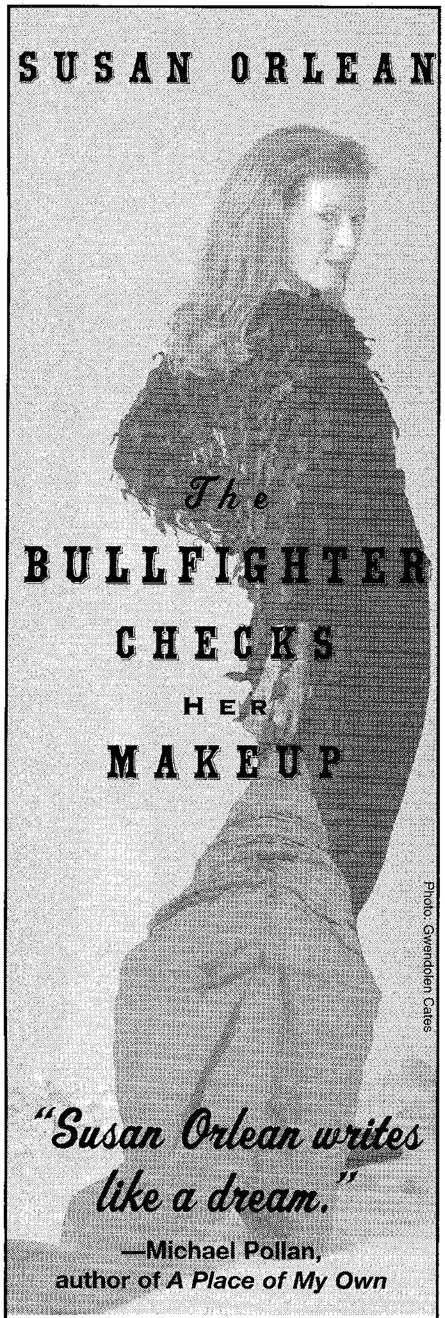

The bestselling author of *The Orchid Thief* returns with profiles of kings, clowns, singers, and surfers.

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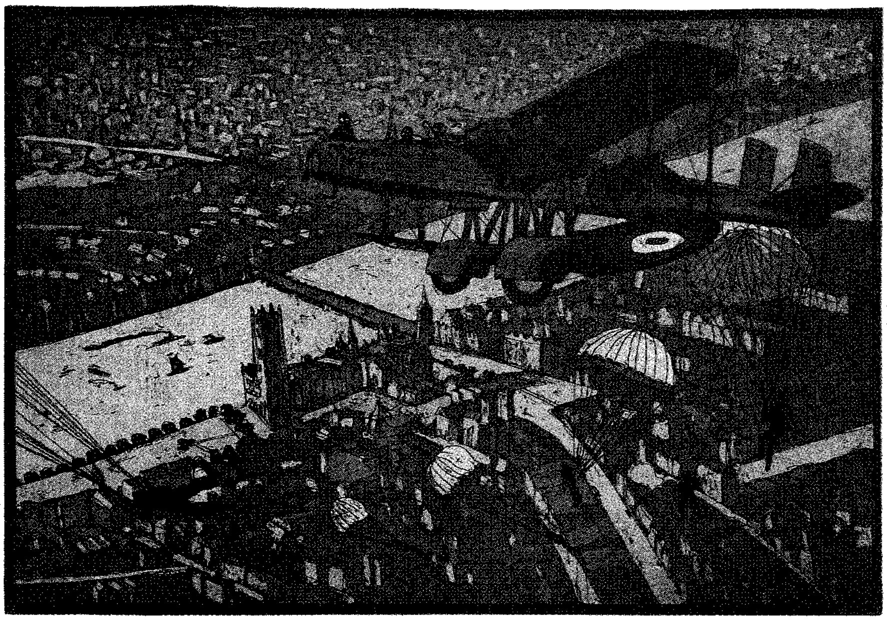

"Handley-Page Heyford Over London," by Robert Andrew Parker, at Davis & Langdale.

ing and composing with the never-say-die fervor that has made her recent resurgence a thing of joy.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through Feb. 17, **Mary Cleere Haran,** who has long been the witty apotheosis of cabaret singers. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Peter Mintun** is in attendance.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Feb. 6-11: Less cantankerous rebels than smart, adventurous players, composers, and bandleaders eager to inject their music with fresh ideas, the members of the Jazz Composer's Collective deserve all the support we can give them. A weeklong festival highlights such forward-thinking players as the bassist **Ben Allison,** the pianist **Frank Kimbrough,** the trumpeter **Ron Horton,** and the saxophonist **Ted Nash.** Dining.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Feb. 11: The **Howard Fishman** quartet settles in on Sundays through the end of the month. The guitarist and singer Fishman is hardly your typical cabaret performer: he can be found in such diverse locales as the Oak Room, Sardi's, and Pete's Candy Store, a neighborhood bar in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. And his sound follows suit: while not exactly Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli reincarnated, Fishman and his violinist Russell Farhang (along with a bassist and a trumpeter) spin out the freshest small-group swing in the city. The band is here to celebrate the release of its latest CD, "I Like You a Lot," an affecting and haunting collection of cunning originals.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Feb. 8-10: The bassist **Mario Pavone** is one of the secret heroes of the New York City jazz scene. Lack of widespread recognition hasn't dimmed his ambition or imagination. He juggles different-sized ensembles to fit his compositional needs; no matter the aggregation, sharp arrangements jostle happily with improvisations, and there's always room for plenty of Pavone's own aggressive playing.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Feb. 11: The **Heath Brothers Band.** Albert Heath, one of our preëminent drummers, may be sitting out this engagement, but with the saxophonist Jimmy and the bassist Percy on hand, this band is still capable of great things. Graceful and gutsy in equal parts, this paragon of sibling unity remains one of jazz's classic small groups. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"The Still-Lifes of Evaristo Baschenis: The Music of Silence."** Through March 4. ♦ **"Rain of the Moon: Silver in Ancient Peru."** Through April 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Janine Antoni, Shahzia Sikander, and Kara Walker close out MOMA's millennial series of cloth-banner commissions, with three pieces hanging just outside the museum's front door. Walker's "Miss Obedience," the only one immediately recognizable as art, shows a white figure, the distinctly Walkeresque, African-featured Miss of the title, breaking a shackle and her arm to tumble through rabbit-hole-like black space toward the sidewalk. Sikander's "Maligned Monsters" features a Hindu deity and a Greek statue of a woman, which, with the title text, appear to bill a revisionist show of Indian and classical Western art. Antoni's "Mom" is even more disguised—she asked the museum for one of its own distinctive banners and removed the final "A." Through March 13. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—The latest collaboration between the impishness of Frank Gehry and the grandiosity of Thomas Krens is on view in the form of a proposal for a new Guggenheim museum, a sort of Bilbao 2, to be built just below the South Street Seaport, in Manhattan. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—A retrospective devoted to the work of Sol LeWitt, the Tom Sawyerish Conceptualist who gets assistants to execute his ideas, includes a zigguratlike sculpture, wall paintings, books, works on paper, and photographs. Through Feb. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays 1 to 9.)

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—**"Knots and Surfaces,"** an installation by Diana Thater, consists of sped-up video footage of honeybees flitting over colored hexagons. The images are projected across the floor and walls to create a kind of intermittent speckled effect: it's a bit like driving in a fast car through a cloud of insects. Nearby, a wall of stacked monitors features more bees, this time crawling lan-

guidly over marigolds. A gallery handout says that Thater is interested in recent scientific research about the way bees use movement to communicate with one another—Thater, alas, is no honeybee. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

MORGAN LIBRARY
29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—**"The World Observed"** displays a hundred and twenty drawings on loan from Charles Ryskamp, the former director of the Morgan Library and the Frick. Judging from the utterly eclectic selection, Ryskamp favors modesty, charm, and skill: the show's signature piece might well be Sinibaldo Scorza's study of a guinea pig. A doll-size Degas painting of an empty flowerpot and a Paul Delaroche watercolor of a rumpled bed are equally typical: both are haunting trifles. But the most memorable images come from nearly forgotten artists like Scorza and C. F. Emanuel Larsen, an early-nineteenth-century Dane whose panoramic "Harbor Scene with Soldiers Bathing" has an eerie Photo-Realist clarity. Through May 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5; Fridays, 10:30 to 8; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

PIERRE HUYGHE
The botched bank heist that inspired the movie "Dog Day Afternoon" is the subject of this riveting thrice-told tale. The real-life robber, John Wojtowicz, now a free man, reënacts his crime on videotape, correcting the film's supposedly erroneous interpretation. (These days, Wojtowicz bears more resemblance to Rodney Dangerfield than to his onscreen alter ego, Al Pacino). The footage looks like a low-budget version of "America's Most Wanted" and, paradoxically, the excerpts of the "original" film projected alongside it look more real. The piece concludes with crime-scene footage, broadcast live in 1972 (preëmpting a speech by President Nixon). By this point in the show, the actual event looks inchoate and blurry, like a fading memory. Through Feb. 10. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER
The artist, a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker*, offers engravings, etchings, watercolors, and illustrated books. The works take many forms, but two styles predominate: the dream journal and the eyewitness account of some event Parker could not possibly have been present for (British air raids or the liberation of Paris, for example). However implausible the subject, Parker reports with a combination of deceptive lightness and eerie authority that owes much to Borges. Through March 3. (Davis & Langdale, 231 W. 60th St. 838-0333.)

Short List

VITO ACCONCI AND ANA MENDIETA
Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470.
Through March 3.

EMILY EVELETH
Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through Feb. 10.

WENDY MARK
Bookstein, 50 E. 78th St. 439-8605.
Through March 24.

ERNESTO PUJOL
Ramis Barquet, 41 E. 57th St. 644-9090.
Through Feb. 17.

JOHN WALKER
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.
Through March 3.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

SHIRLEY KANEDA
Crisp, bright, peculiar shapes slide around these abstract paintings like confetti on an ice rink. As in a lot of recent abstraction, there's a family resemblance to de Kooning's late "Alzheimerish" paintings. Kaneda's images, however, are as conspicuously calculated as de Kooning's were improvised. The same boomerang and razor-blade shapes cycle through a palette of sugary blue, pistachio, and magenta. Several paintings turn out to be lightly altered versions, or simply details, of their neighbors. As a result, the images feel interchangeable, like computer-aided design exercises. Through March 3. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

NINA KATCHADOURIAN
In a clever spin on "smart" technologies, the artist has doctored a commercial popcorn maker: she added a computer that converts the staccato sounds of popping into Morse code, which it simultaneously displays and reads aloud. (The gallery is stocked with self-serve bags for hungry viewers.) Nonsense like "mlvni" is typical, but once a day the artist comes in to parse the text, extracting words like "lob" and "hi" from the garble. Vacuum packs of popcorn, tacked to the wall, cite her findings, and a case of cast-bronze kernels commemorates the talking corn's first word. The project may bring to mind the work of Jeffrey Valance (who also lampoons the desire to extract meaning from the meaningless) and of Charles Long (who cast kernels in the early nineties). But it's still fresh. Through Feb. 24. (Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 643-2070.)

JENNIFER REEVES
Only a few years ago, Reeves was making radiant, childlike abstractions; now her work has hit adolescence. In a group of deliberately glib, foul-mouthed paintings, she offers cartoon dialogues among abstract shapes. In one of the more good-natured ones, a pin-striped monolith asks, "Do you *have* to be such a romantic?" A cluster of anti-slip shower flowers answer, "Yep." Reeve's Crisco-thick paint gives images like this a turgid look that matches their glum one-liners. Not a great show, but a reckless, interesting change of direction. Through Feb. 17. (Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999.)

"DELIBERATE LIVING"
This group show cribbed its title from Thoreau's "Walden": the emphasis here is on the contemplative rather than the entertaining side of art. The tone is set by a life-size re-creation, by Darren Almond, of a bus-stop sign from Oswiecim, Poland, which almost blocks the entrance to the gallery. Nearby, ten small wooden cylinders, painted red, white, and black, by the late Romanian artist André Cadere, are strung on a dowel like so many prayer beads. A sweet, if hackneyed, short film by the collaborative team of De Rijke and De Rooij presents a pair of Chinese lovers amid a picture-postcard bloom of magnolia. But, unfortunately, when the show moves from these well-chosen pieces to photography and film, it devolves into mishmash. Through Feb. 10. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

Short List

AZIZ + CUCHER
Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.
Through Feb. 24.

UNA HENRY
I-20 Gallery, 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100.
Through Feb. 10.

KAREN KILIMNIK
303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-0024.
Through Feb. 10.

BHASKAR KRAG
Grimm, 505 W. 28th St. 564-7662.
Through Feb. 10.

ROBERT LONGO
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.
Through March 3.

DONA NELSON
Cheim & Reid, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.
Through Feb. 24.

DAVID SALLE
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.
Through March 3.

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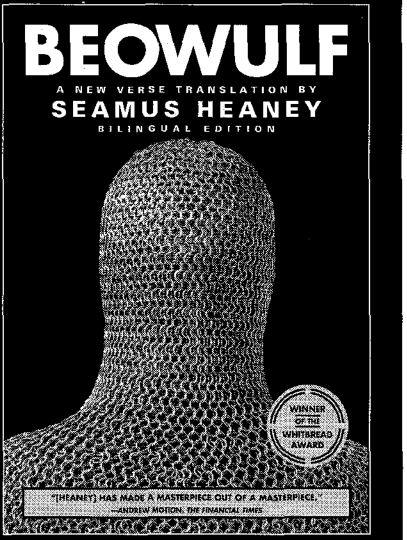
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—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*, front-page review

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—*The Economist*

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GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

KUTLUG ATAMAN
To American audiences, "Women Who Wear Wigs" may sound like a Lifetime special hosted by Dolly Parton. But the New York début of this London-based video artist is deadly serious and profoundly political. Ataman interviewed four Turkish women: an alleged terrorist in hiding, a well-known journalist suffering from cancer, an Islamic student barred from class for wearing a scarf, and a transsexual prostitute and political activist who is going bald. The interviews are projected simultaneously, in a horizontal row at floor level (the frame where the student should be is black, to protect her identity). The cacophony of competing soundtracks tries one's patience, but the interplay of narratives occasionally rewards it. Through Feb. 24. (Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.)

"NOW PLAYING"
The aural in art is the focus of this terrific show of six sculptures, a videotape, and a jukebox's worth of sound pieces, rotated by the gallery on request. The playlist ranges from the haunting singsong of Kristin Oppenheim's "She Was Long Gone," from 1995, to a recording of Marcel Duchamp made in 1968. Though most of the visual art has an audio component—a vest by Vito Acconci is made of music boxes—a few are silent, and merely allude to sound. The artist and d.j. Christian Marclay dials it down in his playful piece, "Bouche-Oreille," which is nothing more than two terra-cotta disks, replicas of the mouthpiece and earpiece from an old-fashioned phone. Through Feb. 17. (Inglett, 100 Wooster St. 343-0573.)

Short List

BIRDIE LUSCH
K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 219-9918.
Through Feb. 9.

MARTIN MULL
Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863.
Through Feb. 17.

DENNIS OPPENHEIM
Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.
Through Feb. 28.

MARTIN WONG
P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642.
Through Feb. 24.

AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Feb. 13-15 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Nearly two thousand lots of furniture, silver, tribal and Oceanic art works, antiquities, books, and rugs and carpets. (York Ave. and 71st St. 606-7000.)

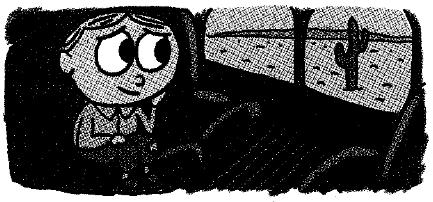
DOYLE
Feb. 7 at 10 A.M.: More than a hundred and fifty perfume bottles from a single-owner collection, including a Salvador Dali design, "Le Roy Soleil," for Elsa Schiaparelli. Also on offer are numerous examples of *pâte de verre* vases and figures, a selection of paperweights, and a collection of Royal Worcester porcelain and pottery being sold to benefit the Brooklyn Museum of Art. ♦ Feb. 13 at 1: "Dogs in Art," an auction of paintings, sculptures, and ephemera held to coincide with the annual dog show of the Westminster Kennel Club; a number of special events (such as a champagne "dog brunch" with the columnist Cindy Adams, to benefit the A.S.P.C.A.) are also planned. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
Feb. 8 at 2 and 6: A selection of vintage posters from America and Europe; items from most of the traditional sources—travel, magic shows, retail items, and propaganda—are represented. The evening session is devoted entirely to skiing posters: the range runs from classic prewar styles (such as a radiantly colored mountain scene made in 1928 to advertise the Swiss Jungfrau Railway) to more unpredictable modern designs ("Through a Frosted

BOOK CURRENTS

The Orphan's Life

As a Yale sophomore, the future governor of Alaska John Brady wrote to the Children's Aid Society, which had sent him west in 1859: "One of your agents came there and asked how many boys who had no parents would love to have nice homes in the West, where they could drive horses and oxen, and have as many apples and melons as they could wish." Stephen O'Connor's **ORPHAN TRAINS** (Houghton Mifflin) tells the story of the C.A.S., and specifically of the life of its founder Charles Loring Brace, an abolitionist, minister, and Civil War journalist. Brace's writings discuss the rationale behind sending small children by rail to new "parents," who were often more interested in acquiring farmhands.


RODNEY ALAN GREENBLATT

In England, many orphans who had been abused in workhouses eventually wound up in prisons. Laura Peters's **ORPHAN TEXTS** (Manchester) attributes the prevalence of orphans in Victorian literature to an anxiety about society's failure to protect its children. Oliver Twist's adoption, after his resistance to becoming "a thief, a liar, a devil" in Fagin's band, reassured a culture that idealized the family. Peters writes, "Although one would expect that orphans needed a family, in short, the reality was that the family needed orphans."

Anita Rau Badami's forthcoming novel **THE HERO'S WALK** (Algonquin) centers on a contemporary Indian family in need of an orphan. The "Big House" of the Rao clan is loud with bickering: a lustful spinster battles with her mother over her crush on the milkman across the alley while her nephew argues with his disapproving father. When an orphaned granddaughter comes to stay, her potential to change things is immediately apparent—in her beaded hair, her homemade tattoo, and her refusal, at least at first, to say anything at all.

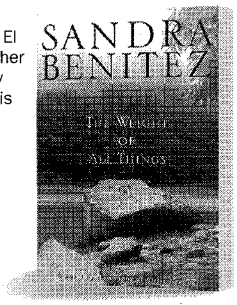
—*Nell Freudenberger*

Books.
[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

Relax with a Good Book

THE WEIGHT OF ALL THINGS

by Sandra Benítez

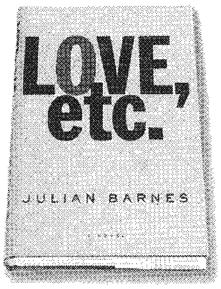


Set against the brutal backdrop of war-torn El Salvador, a young boy searches for his mother after watching her body being dragged away after a violent riot. Based on real events, this compelling tale illuminates the horrifying realities of life in Latin America. (Hyperion)

Pub. Price: $22.95
Our Price: $18.36
Readers' Advantage
Member's Price: $16.52

LOVE, ETC.

by Julian Barnes

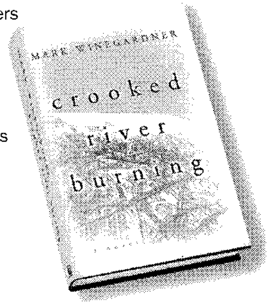


A sequel to 1992's *Talking It Over*, this witty tale about a complicated love triangle picks up ten years later in the lives of Oliver, Stuart and Gillian. Still haunted by their poor romantic choices, they endure uncovered secrets, surprises and revenge. (Knopf)

Pub. Price: $23.00
Our Price: $18.40
Readers' Advantage
Member's Price: $16.56

CROOKED RIVER BURNING

by Mark Winegardner

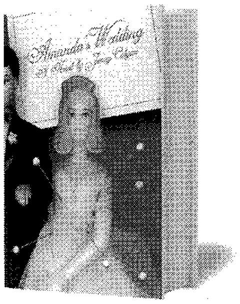


In this rich, epic tale, two star-crossed lovers from two different worlds meet and part over the course of twenty years. Weaving both fact and fiction into an historical tapestry of Cleveland, this novel features a wealth of famous figures, including Eliot Ness, Alan Freed and Carl Stokes, the city's first black mayor. (Harcourt)

Pub. Price: $27.00
Our Price: $21.60
Readers' Advantage
Member's Price: $19.44

AMANDA'S WEDDING

by Jenny Colgan

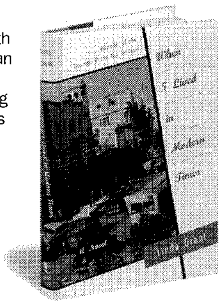


In the hilarious vein of *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *My Best Friend's Wedding*, this story of a group of former schoolmates trying to sabotage their vicious, social-climbing friend's wedding and save the prospective groom from a life of misery bursts with razor sharp dialogue, eccentric characters and endless laughs. (Warner)

Pub. Price: $23.95
Our Price: $19.16
Readers' Advantage
Member's Price: $17.24

WHEN I LIVED IN MODERN TIMES

by Linda Grant



Award-winning author Linda Grant returns with a moving coming-of-age tale of a young woman trying to start a new life in Israel in 1946. Unsure of herself and her constantly changing world, she assumes three different identities in order to survive. (Dutton)

Pub. Price: $23.95
Our Price: $19.16
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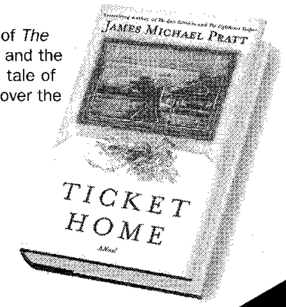
TICKET HOME

by James Michael Pratt



James Michael Pratt, bestselling author of *The Lighthouse Keeper*, weaves World War II and the present day together in an unforgettable tale of love and loss in which two brothers discover the awesome power of the human spirit. (St. Martin's Press)

Pub. Price: $23.95
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Looking Glass," a charming remnant of psychedelic culture, in which a Tenniel Jabberwocky invites the viewer to the 1973 Dartmouth Winter Carnival). (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

SEEDS OF PEACE
The organization, which brings Arab and Israeli teen-agers together at a Maine summer camp, holds its fourth annual celebrity auction, at which one can bid for such items as a letter from Yitzhak Rabin to Willie Mays, a tour of the set of "Friends" with David Schwimmer, or a meal with Queen Noor of Jordan. Christine Baranski hosts the event, which includes a buffet dinner, while Sotheby's inimitable Hugh Hildesley directs the bidding. (Cipriani's, 110 E. 42nd Street. For information about tickets, call 573-8040. Feb. 8 at 6:30.)

NEW YORK ARMORY ANTIQUES SHOW
More than a hundred dealers gather from afar to offer everything from American, European, and Asian furniture to maps, rare books, and a host of decorative accessories. Keep an eye out for the dealers Brewster & Brown, who specialize in Eastern European paintings from the turn of the nineteenth century. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 67th St. For information, call 914-698-3442. Feb. 7-11.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

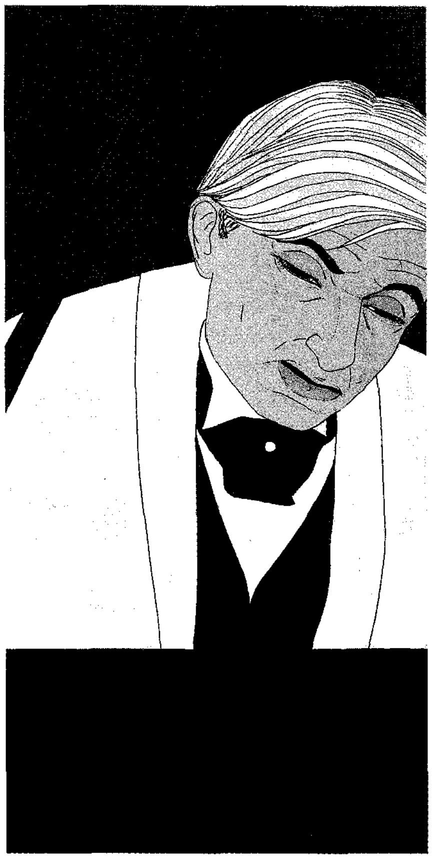
THOMAS JOSHUA COOPER
It's tempting to imagine that in his formative years Cooper had a near-religious experience with a Mark Rothko or a Clyfford Still painting. His rapturous photographs of the Atlantic use light, shadow, and water with bravado and subtlety. In one, waves blurred by a long exposure and rocks in sharp focus have a delicate equilibrium and eerie interdependence that win and keep the viewer's attention. Through March 3. (Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.)

MIKE DISFARMER
During a midlife crisis that transformed him into a photographer, Mike Meyers (1884-1959) changed his last name to Disfarmer, set up a small studio, and began to document the citizens of his native Heber Springs, Arkansas. These portraits, of subjects standing against a neutral backdrop, emphasize the subtle statement made by the tilt of a cap or the way a sleeve is rolled. The result is a fusion of Irving Penn-like elegance and "Grapes of Wrath" realism. Through March 3. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

"MARITIME ALBUM"
A hundred photos were culled from more than half a million in the archives of the Mariners' Museum for this entertaining corporate-lobby show. Most of the pleasure lies in views of nasty shipwrecks, battleships being blown up, and other vessels on their way to bad ends, including the Argonaut, an early submarine designed to drive along the ocean floor, and the doomed Monitor, with its haggard crew and their cooking pots out on deck. The selection is longer on history than on art—we see the Queen of the Sandwich Islands visiting the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1887, and the first airplane to take off from the deck of a ship, in 1910—but unknown amateurs and forgotten commercial photographers offer great surprises, from boatloads of watermelons being navigated through gridlock on the Dismal Swamp Canal to the elegant, Calder-like shapes of rudders and propellers. Through April 1. (PaineWebber, Sixth Ave. at 52nd St. 713-2885.)

"SIGHTLINES"
The strengths and weaknesses of these three Asian photographers are well represented in Katsumi Omura's image of a tangled grid of electrical wires, which looks like a terrific modernist abstraction with a chance bonus—a bird swooping through with its wings spread—until viewers realize that the artist has contrived to document the same beautiful accident many times, an idea drained of its impact by repetition. Osamu James Nakagawa's work is the most interesting here; he photographs rain slipping along bullet-train windows and puckering on wire screens, with blurs and reflections and the occasional wandering snail for extra-lonely-feeling, abstraction-interrupting content. Nakagawa likes to compare this series of wet windows to haiku—a cross-medium comparison that would seem arrogant if he hadn't pulled it off dozens of times, like some dogged, melancholy scientist. Kith Tsang Tak Ping, meanwhile, dresses blurry black-and-white nothingness up in the chemical spills and burns of deliberately sloppy darkroom work. Through Feb. 24. (Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 645-9444.)

"STRAIGHT ARROWS"
These four young photographers—Melanie Einzig, Matt Harnett, Peter Kayafas, and Gus Powell—are updating straight street photography—no casting, no scripting, no digital adjustments, just natural light, old-fashioned cameras, and live action. New York and its citizens—maybe you're in one of these—look better than usual from the artists' distinct, often wry, perspectives. Through March 17. (Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.)



Jean-Yves Thibaudet plays French music at Carnegie Hall on February 7.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
"Andy Warhol: Photography" opens with a chronology in archive photographs: the artist as a skinny kid and a surprisingly clownish young man (bulbous nose, early receding hairline), then finally reborn as the consummate club kid, with a new nose, new hair, and a new life. His early reproductions of accident photographs begin the retrospective, introducing his first pet subject, morbidity, and leading easily into his second, celebrity, in materials for Jackie Kennedy silk screens—displayed with a friend's telling narrative of the intense, erotic afternoon he and Andy spent watching coverage of the Kennedy shooting. The celebrity silk screens and Polaroids that followed fill the lower galleries, but viewers will be forgiven for wandering into **"Perfecting Mankind: Eugenics and Photography"** and mistaking it for more Warhol materials—these catalogues of racial types scour the human face with the obsessive gaze, and inherent tragedy, of his early work. Both shows through March 18, at Midtown. Uptown, Carrie Mae Weems's "The Hampton Project" is up through April 1. (Uptown: 1130 Fifth Ave., at 93rd St. Midtown: 1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

NAN GOLDIN
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through Feb. 17.

BILL JACOBSON
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 627-2410.
Through March 10.

IZIMA KAORU
Von Lintel & Nusser, 555 W. 25th St.
242-0599. Through March 3.

NINO MIGLIORI
De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through March 3.

BILL OWENS
Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752.
Through March 10.

RON VAN DONGEN
Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St.
242-8811. Through Feb. 18.

SHIZUKA YOKOMIZO
Cohan Leslie and Brown, 138 Tenth Ave.,
at 19th St. 206-8710. Through Feb. 17.

"AMERICAN"
Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.
Through Feb. 10.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Un Ballo in Maschera," with Michele Crider, Youngok Shin, Elena Zaremba, Franco Farina, and Alexandru Agache; Plácido Domingo conducts. (Feb. 7 at 8 and Feb. 10 at 1:30.) ♦ A revival of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's production of Rossini's **"L'Italiana in Algeri,"** with Jennifer Larmore, Paul Austin Kelly, Alessandro Corbelli, and Samuel Ramey; Bruno Campanella. (Feb. 8 at 7:30.) ♦ **"La Traviata,"** with Patricia Racette, Roberto Aronica, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky in the leading roles; Jun Märkl. (Feb. 9 at 8 and Feb. 12 at 7:30.) ♦ The first performances this season of Massenet's **"Manon,"** another Ponnelle production, with Ruth Ann Swenson (her first appearance at the Met in the title role), Giuseppe Sabbatini (in his house début), Roberto di Candia, and Paul Plishka; Julius Rudel. (Feb. 10 at 8 and Feb. 13 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

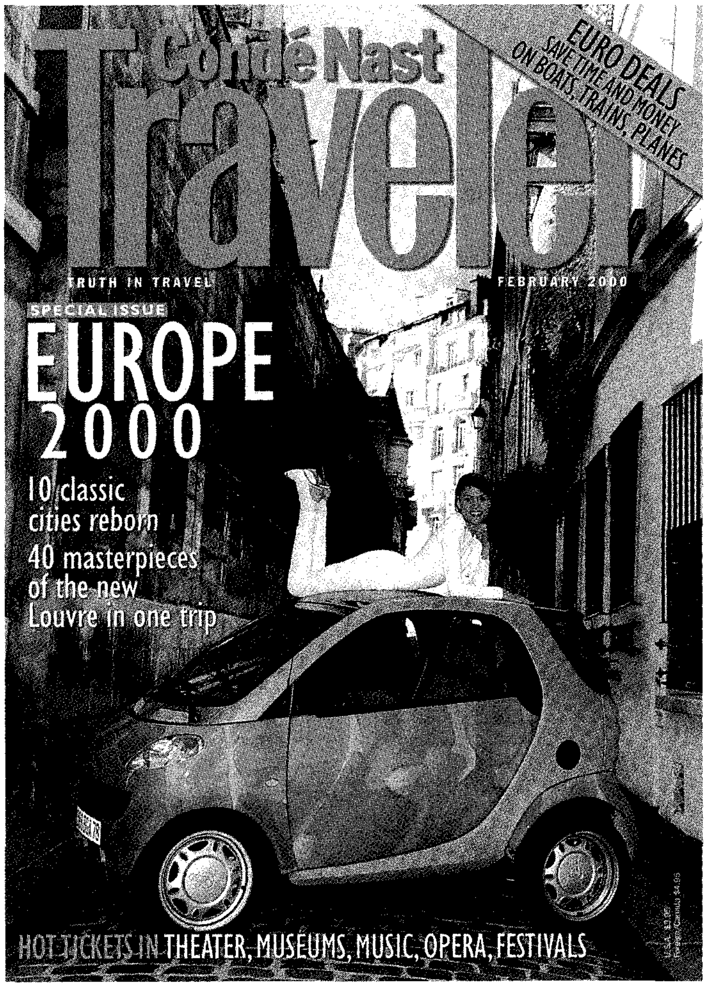
"THE MAKROPULOS CASE"
"Věc Makropulos" (1925) scored a triumph at its 1926 première despite its confusing plot, stylistic innovations, and considerable technical demands. While not the most beloved of Janáček's operas, it has emerged as his most perfectly crafted and vividly characterized one, and the critically acclaimed Nikolaus Lehnhoff production by the Glyndebourne Festival, bringing its forces to the U.S. for the first time, does it justice. Anja Silja's voice is no longer a beautiful one, but her thirty years' experience in the role of Emilia Marty—the three-hundred-and-thirty-seven-year-old opera singer desperately trying to stay alive—has culminated in a dramatically vivid personification. Sung in the original Czech, with English surtitles; David Atherton conducts the Brooklyn Philharmonic. (BAM Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Feb. 11 and Feb. 13 at 7:30.)

"MACBETH"
Robert Bass conducts the Collegiate Chorale and the Orchestra of St. Luke's in a concert performance of the revised 1865 version of Verdi's Shakespearean masterpiece. Juan Pons takes the role of the ambitious Scot; Maria Guleghina is his wife. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 12 at 8.)

"THE EMPEROR JONES"
Louis Gruenberg's opera, commissioned and successfully premièred by the Metropolitan Opera in 1933, adheres closely to the text of Eugene O'Neill's play; the cast is more likely to speak its words in a

LARA TOMLIN

PURE PLEASURE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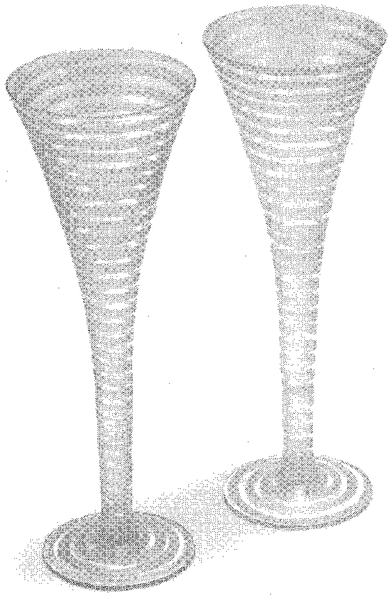

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ragged Schönbergian sprechgesang than to sing them, though the demands of the title role are great (the baritone Lawrence Tibbett, in a famous performance, played the first Jones). While arguably one of the most important American operas, the work's uncomfortable subject—a former Pullman porter rules tyrannically over his fellow-blacks on a Caribbean island—has severely limited its performance. This staging by the scrappy Operaworks (which uses a digitally programmed "Virtual Orchestra" in lieu of a live ensemble) is the first in New York since the Met's. Frederick Redd is Jones; David Leighton conducts. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 946-6379. Feb. 12 at 8. Through March 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The composer-conductor André Previn concludes his two-week residency. Previn's compositions tend to be charming and deft, and "Diversions," at least from its title, promises to be more of the same; the program continues with the sugar-sweet Violin Concerto of Erich Korngold, played by the commanding soloist Gil Shaham—he and Previn have recorded it, wonderfully—and concludes with Beethoven's Symphony No. 4. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 8-9 at 8 and Feb. 13 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK VIRTUOSI
The chamber symphony, conducted by Kenneth Klein, offers a concert of music by some notable Latin-American composers, including Paquito D'Rivera (who will also perform), José Serebrier, and the legendary Afro-Cuban jazz master Chico O'Farrill. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Feb. 7 at 8.)

DALLAS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
The music of Lowell Liebermann, the D.S.O.'s composer-in-residence, is among the most conservative being produced today, but when it comes to his prime influences—Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich, Fauré—he is a man who knows his stuff. Stephen Hough is the soloist in the Piano Concerto No. 2, which, along with "Timepiece," by Texas composer Cindy McTee, is enjoying its New York première. Conductor Andrew Litton rounds out the program with Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6 and the incisive 1945 version of Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 9 at 8.)

SWEDISH RADIO CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA
The two groups settle in for a three-concert festival. Feb. 9 at 8: The choir, appearing here with the Eric Ericsson Chamber Choir, is renowned for its mastery of the most complex modern scores; with its director, Eric Ericsson, it presents a concert of Ligeti, Lidholm, Strauss, and Schnittke (the Concerto for Choir). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 721-6500.) ♦ Feb. 10 at 8: The orchestra, conducted by Manfred Honeck, performs Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony and Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto (with the estimable Truls Mørk). (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.) ♦ Feb. 11 at 3: Honeck gathers the orchestra, choir, and chamber choir together for Verdi's "Requiem"; Marina Mescheriakova, Nadja Michael, Marco Berti, and John Relyea are the vocal soloists. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.)

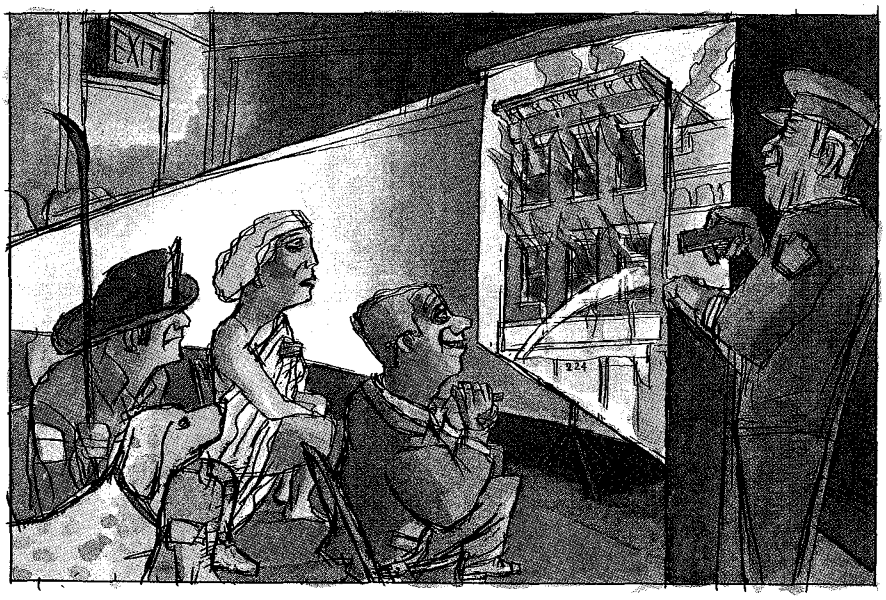
RECITALS

JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET
The elegant French pianist makes his Carnegie Hall recital début in music by Debussy (the Préludes, Book II), Ravel, and Messiaen. (247-7800. Feb. 7 at 7:30.)

THREE QUARTETS
Feb. 7 at 8: The eminent Guarneri String Quartet performs music by Bartók (the Quartet No. 3), Brahms, and Ravel, at the 92nd St. Y. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 993-1100.) ♦ Feb. 8 at 8: As part of his series of "Perspectives" concerts, the pianist Maurizio Pollini programs music for distinguished visiting ensembles; here the Emerson Quartet graciously complies with music by Bach, Kurtág, and Beethoven (the Quartet in B-Flat Major, Op. 130, with the "Grosse Fuge"). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.) ♦ Feb. 11 at 11 A.M.: The Whitman Quartet, a fine young American ensemble, offers a program of Brahms and Prokofiev. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 721-6500.)

BARGEMUSIC
Feb. 8 at 7:30 and Feb. 11 at 4: Mozart's String Quintet, K. 515; Dvořák's String Sextet, Op. 48; and Schönberg's "Transfigured Night." ♦ Feb. 9-10 at 7:30: More Mozart and Dvořák, along with the Viola Sonata of Shostakovich, his last completed work (with the violist Toby Hoffman). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"WHEN MORTY MET JOHN . . ."
Morton Feldman and John Cage first met at a Carnegie Hall concert in 1950, and to celebrate the lives of these two great liberators of American composition there is a three-day festival of events, including a panel discussion, a film screening, a talk on New York in the nineteen-fifties, and a museum tour of some of the art works that influenced them both (by Rothko, Rauschenberg, Guston, de Kooning, and others). The concerts—of music by Cage, Feldman, and their colleagues Earle Brown and Christian Wolff—are held on Feb. 9-10



The lecture series "Heat: An Evening With . . . ," at the New York City Fire Museum.

BEN KATCHOR

at 8 and Feb. 11 at 3. (Weill Recital Hall. For tickets and further information, call 247-7800.)

VAN CLIBURN PIANO COMPETITION

The eleventh quadrennial competition will be held in Fort Worth, Texas, in the spring, but the public can get a preview by attending the six days of juried screening recitals, in which thirty-four young pianists from around the world will be playing their hearts out for a shot at the big time. (Caspary Auditorium, Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave., at 66th St. For ticket information, call 327-7007. Feb. 9 at 8 and Feb. 10-14 at 12 and 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

Feb. 9 at 8: The Society closes up the "Great Day in New York" festival of new music with works by Richard Danielpour, Melinda Wagner, Tania León, David Del Tredici, Charles Wuorinen, and others. ♦ Feb. 11 at 5 and Feb. 13 at 7:30: The violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg makes her Society début in music by Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff, and Brahms, assisted by the cellist Gary Hoffman and the pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG

A program organized around the theme of childhood by the pianist Michael Barrett (with the singers Amy Burton and Scott Hendricks), featuring music by Bernstein, Ives, Haydn, Mahler, John Musto, and others. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 13 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"HEAT: AN EVENING WITH . . ."

Vincent Dunn, a retired deputy chief of the New York City Fire Department with more than forty years of experience, has seen his former profession go through a slew of changes. During the urban unrest of the seventies, he recalls, the department was so busy that his co-workers "thought the city was going to burn down." By the time he retired, in 1999, the F.D.N.Y. had taken over the Emergency Medical Services department and was in the business of providing ambulances and medical assistance in addition to fighting fires. On Feb. 8 at 7, Geoff Giglierano, the director of the New York City Fire Museum, talks with Dunn about the future of fire-fighting in the city, a subject about which the gravelly-voiced veteran has no shortage of opinions. "Don't get me wrong," he says. "Today's firefighter has the best protection in the world. They've got the O.S.H.A.-approved bunker gear. But what they need are new tactics. They're fighting fires with turn-of-the-century tactics—1865 tactics." (268 Spring St., between Varick and Hudson Sts. For more information, call 691-1303, ext. 14.)

GARDEN PARTIES

The Harlem Globetrotters, now in their seventy-fifth season of continuous play, stop by Madison Square Garden on Feb. 9 at 7. Some of the team's recent developments include the retirement of the jersey worn by the legendary Meadowlark Lemon and the naming of Pope John Paul II as an honorary team member. He won't be suiting up, but that's not expected to have any effect on the team's chances of winning. ♦ On Feb. 12-13 from 8:30 A.M. to 11 P.M., the arena belongs to the Westminster Kennel Club, as it holds its hundred-and-twenty-fifth annual dog show. (307-7171.)

READINGS

Feb. 11 at 2: By the poet Aleida Rodríguez, from her book "The Garden of Exile." (Wave Hill, 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. For reservations, which are required, call 718-549-3200, ext. 308.) ♦ Feb. 11 at 7: By the novelist Stewart O'Nan and the short-story writer Chris Adrian. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Feb. 13 at 7: By the writers Wayne Koestenbaum, Lynne Tillman, and Clifford Chase, from their recent work. (Art in General, 79 Walker St. No tickets necessary.)

TALK

Feb. 11 at 7:30: The *New Yorker* writer Ken Auletta discusses his latest book, "World War 3.0: The Microsoft Trial and the Battle to Rule the New Economy." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

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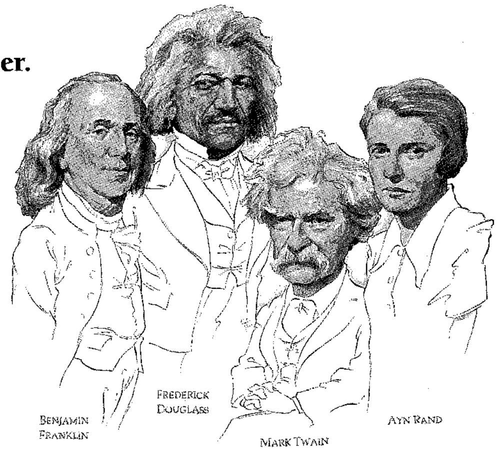

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CHRISTIE'S
GREAT ESTATES

MOVIES OPENING

BAD COMPANY
A dark and obsessive teen romance, set in the suburbs of Paris. Directed by Jean-Pierre Ameris. In French. Opening Feb. 7. (Film Forum.)

HANNIBAL
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Feb. 9.

JOURNEY TO THE SUN
The story of a friendship between a Turkish man and a member of the Kurdish rebel underground. Written and directed by Yesim Ustaoglu. In Turkish and Kurdish. Opening Feb. 9. (Cinema Village.)

NEW YORK IN THE FIFTIES
A documentary based on Dan Wakefield's book, including interviews with Robert Redford, Joan Didion, and William F. Buckley, Jr. Opening Feb. 9. (Pioneer.)

SAVING SILVERMAN
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Feb. 9.

SIGNS & WONDERS
Jonathan Nossiter directed this drama set in Athens about a commodities trader (Stellan Skarsgärd) who believes in premonitions. With Charlotte Rampling. Opening Feb. 9. (Quad Cinema.)

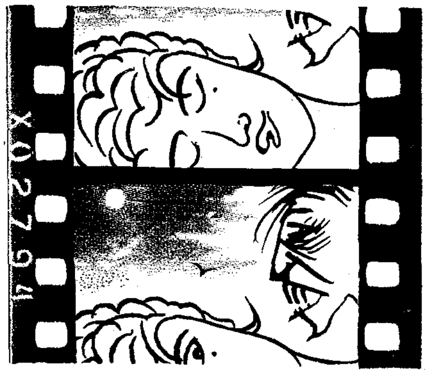
THE TASTE OF OTHERS
A comedic drama about a married businessman (Jean-Pierre Bacri) who seeks entrance into the bohemian circle of an actress (Anne Alvaro) and her friends. Written and directed by Agnès Jaoui. In French. Opening Feb. 9.

FILM NOTES

BEFORE NIGHT FALLS
At its best, Julian Schnabel's second film is a memoir of easy and raffish good times—the endless summer days at the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Schnabel adapted an autobiographical memoir by the poet and novelist Reinaldo Arenas (Javier Bardem), a homosexual who was initially a participant in the revolution, then a victim of it, and was finally allowed to leave Cuba in 1980. Arenas settled in New York, wrote a great deal, and, suffering from AIDS, committed suicide here in 1990. Schnabel doesn't tell this story coherently: characters appear or disappear without explanation, and we don't always know where we are. The method is closer to collage than to Hollywood script construction, but Schnabel works sensually, and that makes up for a lot. Bardem, who has the face of a shy, smiling bull, gives a performance of great charm.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/8/01.) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

CHUNHYANG
Imagine a cross between a Homeric rhapsode, chanting one of the epics in front of a roaring fire, and the blues singer Muddy Waters. That's roughly the sound produced by the great Korean entertainer Cho Sang Hyun. As the film opens, he sits onstage before a contemporary audience and sings of an eighteenth-century Korean Romeo and Juliet. Then we see the tale: in Namwon Province, the governor's son—fifteen-year-old Mongryong (Cho Seung Woo), who has a man's voice and a man's determination—falls in love with, pursues, and immediately marries Chunhyang (Lee Hyo Jung), the beautiful daughter of a courtesan. The scenes of the slender teen-agers courting and making love have a delicate erotic strength—a mixture of shyness and lust—that is nearly unimaginable in a modern Western setting. Directed by Im Kwon Taek, who has made more than ninety films. In Korean.—*D.D.* (1/22/01.) (Quad Cinema.)

CITY HALL
This classy 1996 melodrama charges along on a rush of Yiddish-flavored blarney, reinvigorating the mythology of America's urban melting pot. John Cusack plays the Louisianan-Irish good ol' boy and right-hand man of Al Pacino's Greek-American New York mayor. At the movie's start, a drug dealer and a cop kill each other in Brooklyn and a six-year-old dies in the crossfire—just as Pacino is trying to woo the Democratic Convention to Madison Square Garden. The push of the drama is for Cusack to learn the beauty and danger of his elders' spirit of compromise; perhaps the filmmakers err when they portray him as the harbinger of a cleaner, more righteous political era. Yet the movie still has a tang that's off the streets, not out of a jar. Harold Becker directed, from a script by Ken Lipper, Paul Schrader, Nicholas Pileggi, and Bo Goldman.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Feb. 10.)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FAITHLESS
Marianne (Lena Endre) is an actress, married to a conductor named Markus (Thomas Hanzon). They have a young daughter, Isabelle (Michelle Gylemo), and a disreputable best friend, David (Krister Henriksson). All is well until sex marches in, closely followed by love, with divorce bringing up the rear. The whole sorry episode is recounted by a troubled and impatient Marianne to an aging writer (Erland Josephson), who is either recalling her or imagining her. The movie was scripted by Ingmar Bergman (who no longer makes movies) and directed by Liv Ullmann, the greatest of his leading ladies; comparing it with their former collaborations, you have to say that not much has changed in the lives of Swedes. The earnestness of attitude, the grimness of the humor, and the careful compositions will perplex audiences too young to have seen Bergman movies and sadden, mostly by force of nostalgia, those devoted moviegoers who were raised on little else. Endre is intensity made flesh, but you can't help longing for a glimpse of Ullmann herself. In Swedish.—*Anthony Lane* (1/29/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

THE GIFT
After the snows of "A Simple Plan," Sam Raimi warms up by venturing south; his new movie was shot in Savannah, Georgia, although it still tries to chill the blood. Cate Blanchett stars as Annie, who combines the demanding roles of widow, single mother, clairvoyant, and shrink. One of her clients (Hilary Swank) complains of a violent husband (Keanu Reeves), who not only menaces Annie but ends up taking the rap for the disappearance of a local good-time girl (Katie Holmes). Add Greg Kinnear as an ominously pleasant wimp, and you have a full-strength cast bending its talents to fit a small piece of Gothic nonsense. You get sharp frights and looming fogs, plus innumerable nods to the perils of water, but running underneath it all is a sluggish solemnity, a hint that these horrors are meant to be important. As Raimi's budgets have grown, his cackling sense of fun has begun to shrivel. With Giovanni Ribisi, in a performance he may wish to forget.—*A.L.* (1/15/01) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

THE HOUSE OF MIRTH
The evidence suggests that Edith Wharton may be easier and more rewarding to film than Henry James. "The Age of Innocence" returned Martin Scorsese to his old, obsessive form, and now the British director Terence Davies has been inspired to his best work by Wharton's earlier and less elaborate novel—her first major success, which sold a hundred and forty thousand copies in its first couple of months. Whether moviegoers will match that enthusiasm is hard to tell; there is grace and passion on show here, but they are firmly and gradually stifled. By the film's close, the weight of the wrong done to the heroine, Lily Bart, feels unredeemed. Gillian Anderson lends Bart a fine air of pride and craving. As she spurns the offer of a safe marriage from a property tycoon (Anthony LaPaglia), or of fleshly compromise with the porcine Gus Trenor (Dan Aykroyd), we believe both in her principles and in the certainty of her doom.—*A.L.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Paris.)

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE
The latest film from the talented young Hong Kong writer-director Wong Kar Wai gets us panting for adultery. In the early sixties, in a community of Shanghai refugees living in Hong Kong, Mrs. Chan (Maggie Cheung) and Mr. Chow (Tony Leung) are next-door neighbors in a friendly apartment building. The perfectly dressed and coiffed couple meet, talk, and realize that their frequently travelling spouses are off having an affair with each other. What to do? The movie is all about sensual anticipation. Nat King Cole croons on the soundtrack, and the camera caresses the rain on the streets and the texture of a stone wall in the semi-darkness. So skillfully does the director brings us to a state of breathless expectation that when he refuses to deliver the goods he almost seems to have invented a new form of perversion. In Cantonese and French.—*D.D.* (2/5/01) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE INVISIBLE CIRCUS
With a plot device that could have been solved by a phone call and a voice-over that's heavy on bumper-sticker wisdom, this movie joins a long list of annoying films about that halcyon era known as "the sixties." Here, the spirit of the times is represented by Faith (Cameron Diaz), a carefree tulip who goes to Europe with her boyfriend Wolf (Christopher Eccleston) and manages to die mysteriously in Portugal. Her sister Phoebe (Jordana Brewster) picks up her trail years later and, in the company of Wolf, follows in her sister's footsteps. A few flashbacks later, we learn what we already knew: the sixties were crazy and destructive, but everything was real, man, really real.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, and New York Twin.)

LEFT BEHIND: THE MOVIE
If the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "Rapture" is Blondie, then start stocking up on food and water. This movie, based on the first book in a best-selling series of fundamentalist-Christian novels, takes the events of the Book of Revelation and transposes them to modern times. The result looks and plays out like an after-school special about the Apocalypse. Kirk Cameron is Buck Williams, an intrepid reporter for GNN who "would have reported on Hiroshima from ground zero if he'd been there." Millions of people all over the world have vanished, and those "left behind" can't quite figure out why. Buck investigates various angles—radiation, alien interference—and the movie documents his lengthy procession toward belief. Read your Bible carefully. A global currency, the ascendancy of the U.N., the telling detail that the Antichrist will have a Russian accent—it's all there.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, and Quad Cinema.)

THE LEGEND OF RITA
In which the vibrant young actress Bibiana Beglau warms up the heretofore dour German director Volker Schlöndorff. Beglau plays Rita Vogt, a fictional West German terrorist of the nineteen-seventies who believes she is bringing the armed struggles of the Third World to the capitalist strongholds. Rita is a fool, but we can't take our eyes off Beglau. Her character robs banks, shoots a Paris policeman, and escapes to East Germany, where she enjoys the protection of an intelligence operative (Martin Wuttke) and winds up in a dreary textile plant, cast among women who are dying to get to the West. But Rita retains her fervor for "the Revolution" right up to 1989. Beglau, who is twenty-eight and has appeared in the theatre and in small movie roles, has a challenging stare and a ferocious will that seems to originate somewhere in her lower back and go straight up her spine into her neck and

head, which is held proud and high, like a ballerina's. She throws her sinewy body into whatever she's doing, whether it's work, sex, or stickups. Schlöndorff's narrative is equally direct, abrupt, and vivid. In German.—*D.D.* (2/5/01) (Film Forum.)

O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?

Although the new Coen brothers picture is set in the Depression, the mood of the tale is a deliberate antidepressant. Dark things happen from time to time, but they are rendered with comic glee. Are the Coens being withering or irresponsible when they turn a fiery rally of Klansmen into an occasion for slapstick? Few dogs could be shaggier than the plot, in which three escaped convicts (George Clooney, John Turturro, and Tim Blake Nelson) take a circuitous route home, tripping over a string of Homeric jokes—sultry sirens on a riverbank, John Goodman as a smilingly brutal Cyclops—along the way. The result is never less than enjoyable, and Clooney looks particularly upbeat, but some viewers may sense a fatal lack of grip; undetained by plausibility, this jest of a movie feels even more directionless than its heroes.—*A.L.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

PANIC

William H. Macy at his melancholy best as the son of a former hit man (Donald Sutherland) who has inherited the family business and now wants out. Sutherland's performance as the controlling dad seethes with an almost Iago-like manipulativeness, and Macy, the obedient son, embodies the compartmentalized behavior of a man desperately trying to separate who he is from what he does. Henry Bromell, the writer/director, has a still, understated storytelling style, and he gives Macy's home life a heartbreaking sadness—he's a loving father to his son, while his wife, kept in the dark about his true vocation, has grown distant. When Macy seeks the help of an analyst (it's the current hot plot device), the story takes a darker and more twisted turn.—*Bruce Diones* (Village East Cinemas.)

THE PLEDGE

Glum, affecting realism from Sean Penn, directing his third film. In the Reno area, a retired police detective, Jerry Black (Jack Nicholson), becomes convinced that a rapist-murderer who strikes at little girls is about to strike again. Jerry is a good man, but he's so obsessed with the case that he loses his judgment. He takes in a battered waitress (Robin Wright Penn) and her little daughter, and with horror we realize that his feelings for the girl won't stop him from using her as a lure. The movie, based on a novel by the late Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt, offers a bleak view of isolated people living close to madness. The despair comes heavily and unrelentingly—the colors are mainly gray, the climate wintry—but it feels authentic, and, as a sustained mood, it pulls us into the story. With Sam Shepard and Aaron Eckhart as cops, and Vanessa Redgrave, Helen Mirren, and Mickey Rourke as townspeople. A worthy movie, but don't go expecting an easy time of it.—*D.D.* (1/22/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Union Square.)

SAVE THE LAST DANCE

A hip-hop fairy tale. Julia Stiles, the reigning queen of teen movies, plays Sara, a ballet dancer and high-school senior who moves to inner-city Chicago after her mother dies in a car crash. There, she mixes with her new classmates and learns to use "slammin'" as an adjective. Her love interest is Derek (Sean Patrick Thomas), a Georgetown-bound scholar who performs his own delicate dance: he's ambitious, yet he's trying to maintain his homeboy status. The movie's best scenes are its intimate tutorials—Derek teaches Sara how to sit, stand, and walk the way black people do. Eventually, they kiss, and the only people who really freak out are the old white ones—there's a funny scene on the El where they vamp in front of a disapproving lady. The dancing is surprisingly sedate; less so are Stiles's outfits. It may be a long time before she lives down the Princess Leia hair style she sports in the final scenes.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

SAVING SILVERMAN

Two brilliant comic actors, Steve Zahn and Jack Black, team up as friends who try to persuade their pal (Jason Biggs) not to marry the fiancée from hell (a sexy and cunning Amanda Peet). Director Dennis Dugan moves the story along swiftly and sloppily—the gags are thrown at the audience like pies—but it's the inspired pairing of Zahn (an alluring ringleader with boundless energy) and Black (a natural big-hearted Bozo) which gives the movie its circus appeal.—*B.D.* (Wide release.)

SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE

Or, how to blow a really good idea. The director E. Elias Merhige, noting the deathless appeal of F. W. Murnau's "Nosferatu," has decided to recreate the making of the film. We are transported to nineteen-twenties Berlin for scenes of dreary decadence and from there to a rural movie set, where the obsessive Murnau (John Malkovich) struggles to control the eccentric conduct of Max Schreck (Willem Dafoe), his leading man. "Nosferatu" was one of the earliest "Dracula" adaptations, and it remains the best, but you would never know that from the amateurish mania that prevails here. Merhige buys happily into the rumor that Schreck was a real vampire—bad news for Catherine McCormack, who plays the love interest, and finds that Schreck is only interested in her neck.—*A.L.* (1/15/01) (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, State, Union Square, and Waverly.)

THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER

Close to perfection—one of the most beautifully acted and paced romantic comedies ever made in this country. This 1940 film takes place in the enclosed world of the people who work together in a small department store; Margaret Sullavan and James Stewart are the employees who bicker with each other, and in no other movie has this kind of love-hate been made so convincing. Their performances are full of grace notes; when you watch later James Stewart films, you may wonder what became of this other deft, sensitive, pre-drawling Stewart. As for Sullavan, this is a peerless performance: she makes the shopgirl's pretenses believable, lyrical, and funny. Though it's all set in a Hollywood Budapest, the director, Ernst Lubitsch, sustains a faintly European tone.—*Pauline Kael* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Feb. 11.)

SNATCH

Guy Ritchie caused a stir—mistaken by some for a storm—with his first feature, "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels." Not wishing to tamper with a winning formula, he has returned to the scene of the crime, delivering a further batch of never quite credible Cockneys. They have names like Bullet Tooth Tony (Vinnie Jones) and Brick Top (Alan Ford), and they converse in the artful patois that Ritchie continues to sell as echt. The plot, this time, is more convoluted, involving a diamond theft and a series of boxing matches, none of which, naturally, go according to plan. Ritchie's strength is the running gag; one can only grow fond of a dog that has swallowed a rubber toy and thus squeaks when it tries to bark. His weakness is a hectic, self-advertising style that wearies what it's meant to quicken; you come out feeling sated and soiled. The cast is honored by the presence of Benicio Del Toro, first seen in the garb of a Hasidic Jew, and especially by Brad Pitt, who plays what is rumored to be an Irish Gypsy, although no one, least of all the other characters, can decipher what he has to say.—*A.L.* (1/29/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Waverly.)

TRAFFIC

Tremendous stuff from the first shot to the last. Steven Soderbergh's vivid and wide-spanning view of the "war on drugs" presents three parallel stories, each with its own look and style: the furtive and ambiguous work of two Mexican state troopers (Benicio Del Toro and Jacob Vargas); the frantic investigations of the new American drug czar (Michael Douglas), who discovers that his beautiful, intelligent sixteen-year-old daughter (Erika Christensen) is freebasing cocaine; and the luxurious life of a San Diego woman (Catherine Zeta-Jones) who tries to hold on to her fortune when her drugkingpin husband (Steven Bauer) is arrested and made to stand trial. The first story is photographed in tobacco-stain brown, the second with blue filters, the third in bright sunshine—all by Soderbergh himself, who puts the camera on his shoul-

Jack Black and Steve Zahn in "Saving Silverman," opening February 9.

ROBERT MELEE

der and throws us into the middle of the action. Individually, the scenes play with superb toughness, and the over-all impression is one of high intelligence and great good humor threading its way through a morass.—*D.D.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE WEDDING PLANNER
A featherweight romantic comedy that's purportedly set in San Francisco but takes place in a parallel universe where Jennifer Lopez is Sicilian and spends her Friday nights watching "Antiques Roadshow." Lopez's Mary, the wedding planner of the title, falls for one of her clients (Matthew McConaughey), and as he twangs his way into her heart, the movie's chief gag consists of an Italian suitor with a funny accent.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

YI YI (A ONE AND A TWO)
Marvellous. It begins with a wedding and ends with a funeral, and, in a style that could only be called radiantly matter-of-fact, Edward Yang's movie encompasses the life of a large Taiwanese family and such central elements of middle-class existence as business ethics and the disillusionment of reaching the age of forty-five. The characters live in an Americanized work environment, yet certain emotions nearly lost to Americans, such as modesty and shame, still rule their lives. Yang works very deliberately; you have to slow yourself down to get into the pace of the movie, but once you do every shot seems momentous. He doesn't carve up the space, he frames it, and he excels at portraiture. A character stands alone, in a doorway, or at a window, and Yang is so attentive that he gets the revelation that he wants, tenderly, quietly, before moving on. With Wu Nienjen as the executive father and Jonathan Chang as his indomitably curious little boy. In English, Hokkien, and Mandarin.—*D.D.* (1/8/01) (Cinema Village.)

ALSO PLAYING

CAST AWAY (12/18/00)
Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.

CHOCOLAT
Angelika Film Center, Battery Park 16, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.

HEAD OVER HEELS
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, and Union Square.

SUGAR AND SPICE
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.

VALENTINE
Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME (12/18/00)
Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinema, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.

"Sugar & Spice," a comedy about cheerleaders who rob banks.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 4: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. Feb. 10 at 2: "And Life Goes On . . ." (1992, Abbas Kiarostami; in Farsi). ♦ Feb. 10 at 4:30: "The Public Enemy" (1931, William Wellman). ♦ Feb. 10 at 6:30: "L'Avventura" (1960, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian). ♦ Feb. 11 at 2: "The Shop Around the Corner" (†). ♦ Feb. 11 at 4:30: "The Fury" (1978, Brian De Palma).

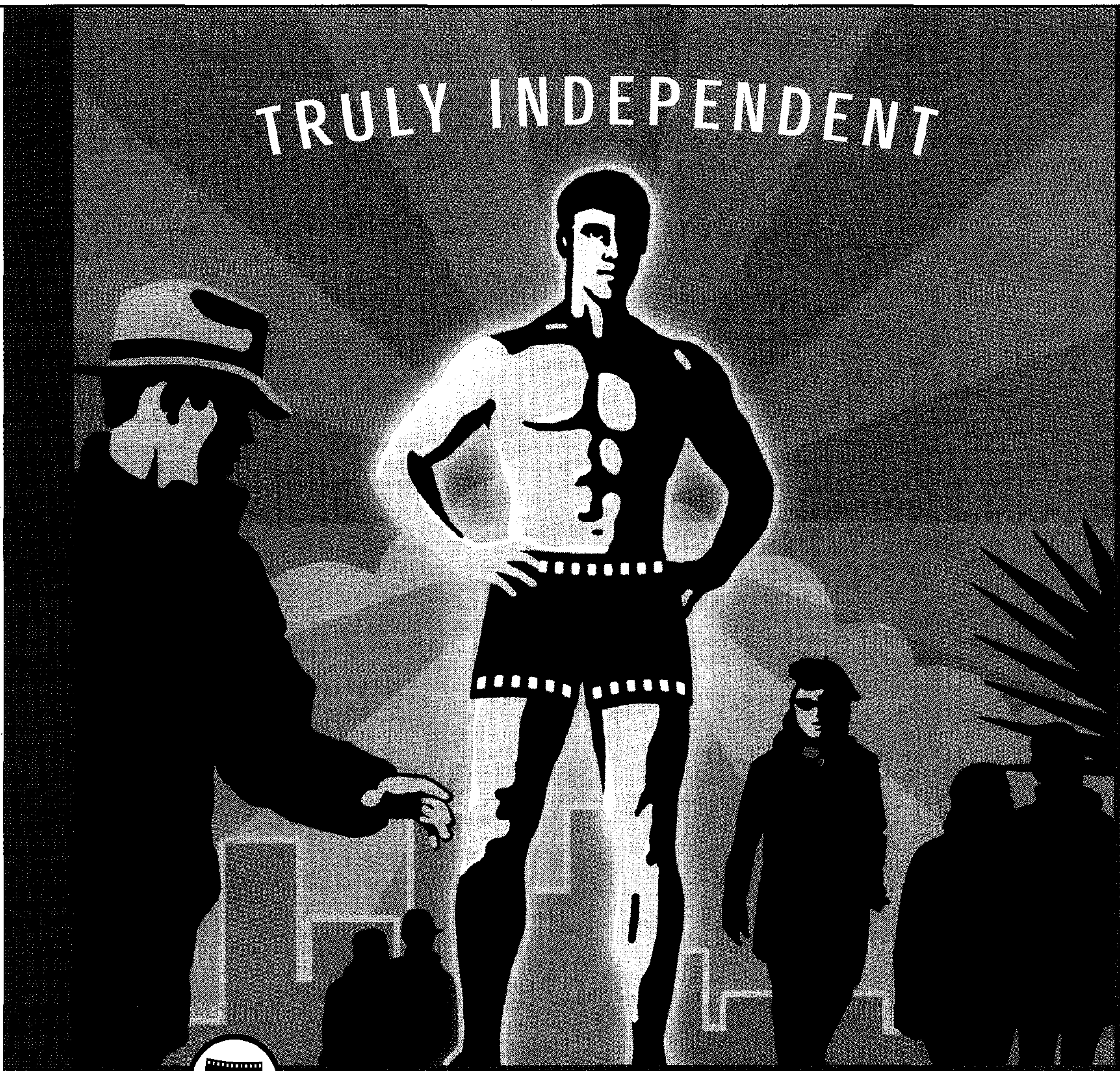
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—Feb. 8 at 4:30, 6:30, and 9:10: "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song" (1971, Melvin Van Peebles). ♦ Feb. 9 at 4:30, 6:40, and 9:30: "Reversal of Fortune" (1990, Barbet Schroeder). A panel moderated by *New Yorker* critic David Denby will follow the 6:40 screening. ♦ Feb. 10 at 2 and 7:30: "Wall Street" (1987, Oliver Stone). ♦ Feb. 10 at 4:30: "City Hall" (†). ♦ Feb. 11 at 2 and 6:40: "American Psycho" (2000, Mary Harron). ♦ Feb. 11 at 4 and 9:30: "Hoffa" (1992, Danny DeVito). ♦ Feb. 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Sitcom" (1998, François Ozon; in French). ♦ Feb. 13 at 4, 6:30, and 9:30: "A Room with a View" (1986, James Ivory). ♦ A five-week retrospective of Krzysztof Kieslowski's "The Decalogue" continues. Feb. 9-13: "Episodes 7 and 8" (1987; in Polish).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through March 15, an Eric Rohmer retrospective. All films are in French. Feb. 9-11 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "My Night at Maud's" (1969). ♦ Feb. 13 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "La Collectionneuse" (1967). ♦ Through April 2, a Marion Davies retrospective. Feb. 12: "The Patsy" (1928, King Vidor) and "Not So Dumb" (1930, Vidor).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through March 27: "New Directions in French Film." Feb. 13 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Rosetta" (1999, Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Feb. 13: The first two seasons of "The Sopranos," along with films selected by David Chase, the show's creator. Feb. 8 at 1: Episodes 1-4. ♦ Feb. 8 at 5:30: Episodes 5-7. ♦ Feb. 9 at 1: Episodes 8-11. ♦ Feb. 9 at 6: Episodes 12-13. ♦ Feb. 10 at 1: Episodes 14-17. ♦ Feb. 10 at 5:30: Episodes 18-20. ♦ Feb. 11 at 1: Episodes 21-24. ♦ Feb. 11 at 5:30: Episodes 25-26. ♦ Feb. 12 at 2:30: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Feb. 12 at 6: *New Yorker* writer Ken Auletta interviews Mr. Chase. ♦ Feb. 13 at 2:30: "White Heat" (1949, Raoul Walsh).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Feb. 15: "Drawing Power: The Cartoons of Chuck Jones." The works of the legendary animator whose pen gave life to Bugs Bunny, Pepe Le Pew, Porky Pig, and a host of other characters will be shown in eighty-five-minute programs. Feb. 9 at 1, 5, and 9 and Feb. 11 at 4: "Upstaging the Arts; or Caught in the Footlights." ♦ Feb. 9 at 3 and 7 and Feb. 11 at 2: "Magnificent Obsessions." ♦ Feb. 10 at 5:30 and 9:30 and Feb. 12 at 2:45: "Comedy Teams." ♦ Feb. 10 at 7:30 and Feb. 12 at 1 and 4:30: "Character Formations." ♦ Feb. 11 at 6 and Feb. 14 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Genre Parodies." ♦ Feb. 11 at 8: "One-Shots and Also-Rans." ♦ Feb. 13 at 1 and Feb. 15 at 3 and 6:45: "Seeing Stars." ♦ Feb. 13 at 3 and Feb. 15 at 1, 4:50, and 8:30: "Wartime Experimentations."



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TRULY INDEPENDENT FILM

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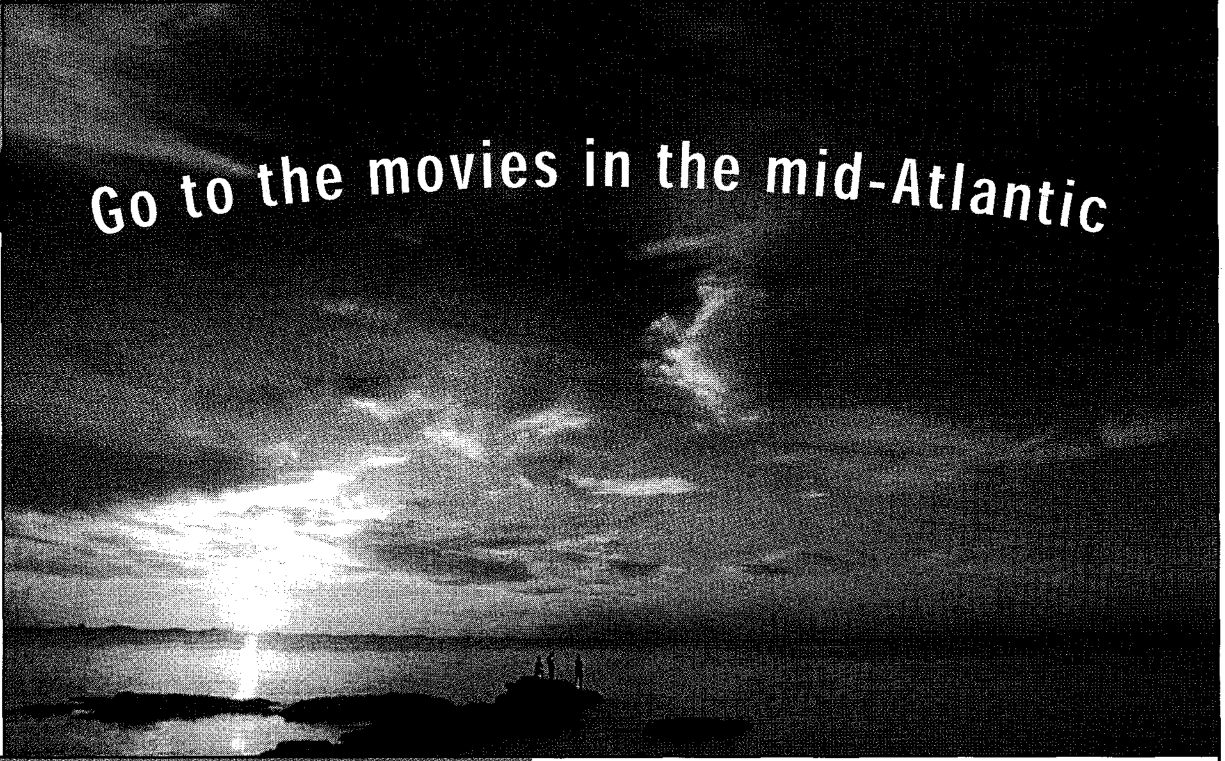

Summer comes early to Bermuda. By April, color and fragrance abound, awakening the senses from their winter slumber. Just a short 90-minute flight from the East Coast, Bermuda provides an ideal place to completely de-stress.

More so than its Caribbean neighbors to the south, this Atlantic isle (650 miles off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina) is a "civilized playground" where visitors can reconnect with themselves and each other, while exploring a whole new world.

But Bermuda is not just another pretty place. This idyllic island combines a thriving culture, rich history and abundance of activities with azure water, clean air, pink-sand beaches and lily-scented breezes.

Now, the island that inspired William Shakespeare to put quill to paper and write "The Tempest," that fired the imaginations of Mark Twain, Eugene O'Neill and Noel Coward, is drawing a new breed of cinematic storytellers.

The fourth Bermuda International Film Festival, a week-long feast of the best of independent film, will be held April 20-26. Already, the event has been embraced by the international film community as well as film aficionados longing to bask in the sun by day – and sit in the dark by night.

Some 40 films will be screened at two theaters in the island's capital City of Hamilton, which, for seven days, will be transformed into a mid-Atlantic meeting place for filmmakers and film professionals from North America, Europe and beyond.

The finest North American and European independent films will be showcased, and the Festival's Official Selection will feature an international array of work by independent filmmakers. A new Documentary section builds on the Festival's reputation for screening provocative works by the world's top documentary filmmakers, while the Bermuda Shorts Award is reserved for the Festival Jury's selection of the top short film. The Festival will also pay tribute to Irish cinema with a sidebar of films from the Emerald Isle.

George Segal photo: David Skinner, The Royal Gazette

TRULY INDEPENDENT FILM

Advertisement

TRULY INDEPENDENT FILM

Filmmakers have proved powerless to turn down an invitation from Festival organizers, with the result that last year all but four of the filmmakers were on-island for the Festival. Their presence adds a certain cachet to the event, but they're on vacation, too, so they eschew the "behind the ropes" approach to mix and mingle with filmgoers. The filmmakers introduce their films, take questions afterwards, and discuss their films over lunch at Rock Island Coffee, the funky Hamilton coffee bar that is a magnet for the island's arts community.

Visitors can experience the business and creative sides of the film world by attending a day of free workshops at Hamilton's waterside Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute. Industry leaders from the US, Canada, and Europe will unravel the mysteries of film financing, marketing, distribution and finding the story. Confirmed panelists include: Andrew Herwitz *(Senior VP, Acquisitions, Miramax)*, Victor Loewy *(Chairman, Motion Picture Group, Alliance Atlantis, Canada's largest production and distribution company)*, Mark Litwak *(Los Angeles film attorney and author)*, Paul Cohen *(Manhattan Pictures International)*, film producer Jon Kilik, Rod Stoneman *(Chief Executive of the Irish Film Board)* and writer/director Roko Belic *(Genghis Blues)*.

The Opening Night Party on April 20 and the Wrap Party on April 26 give film aficionados a chance to mix and mingle with filmmakers and industry guests. A Tribute to Excellence in Film, to be held in Hamilton on April 21, will honor a prominent member of the world film community.

When you're not watching films, the island's first capital, the Town of St. George's, offers a charming and interesting diversion. In fact, the old town and its fortifications recently earned World Heritage Site status, joining a prestigious group that includes the Great Wall of China, the Statue of Liberty, the Taj Mahal and the city of Bath, UK. As the oldest continuously inhabited town of English origin in the Western Hemisphere, the town and its surrounding buildings, monuments and structures illustrate the residents' lifestyles in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

Of course, the island also boasts beautiful beaches, world-class golf on eight courses, tennis, horseback riding, sailing and more than 300 wrecks for scuba divers to explore, including Confederate paddlewheel steamers, cargo steamers and 19th century French frigates.

The Festival has partnered with the island's finest hotels, including Horizons and Cottages, Waterloo House, Fairmont Hamilton Princess, White Sands Hotel & Cottages and Stonington Beach Hotel.

Packages start from $760* from New York, $780* from Boston, $879* from Baltimore, $760* from Atlanta and $849* from Philadelphia.

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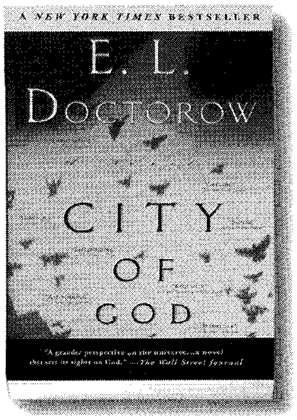
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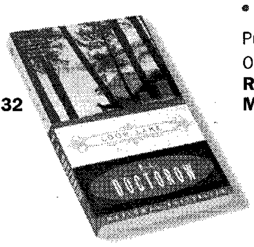
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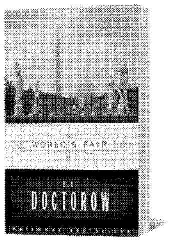
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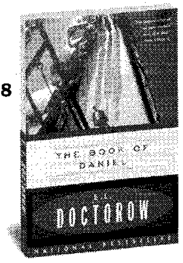
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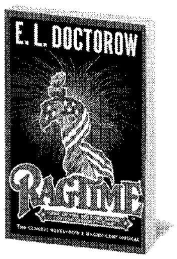
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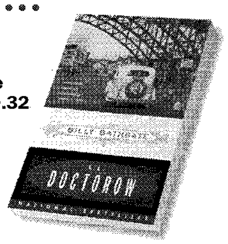
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

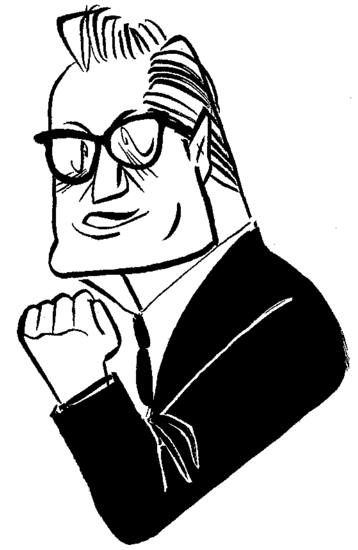
COMMENT
BEHIND BAD LAWS

On May 8, 1973, at a crowded ceremony in the Red Room of the New York State Capitol, Governor Nelson Rockefeller signed into law a set of new penalties for drug crimes, calling them "the strongest possible tools to protect our law-abiding citizens." The penalties represented a sudden and dramatic shift in the state's drug-fighting strategy, and they faced heavy opposition from the very law-enforcement officials they were ostensibly intended to aid, many of whom feared that they would flood the courts. Even at the time, it was clear that the laws were an expression of Rockefeller's larger personal ambitions: just seven months later, he resigned the governorship in order to free himself up for other offices. Still, Rockefeller insisted that his only concern was New Yorkers' safety. At the bill-signing ceremony, he alluded to the critics who had "joined forces and tried unsuccessfully to stop this program" as a "strange alliance of vested interests, political opportunists, and misguided soft-liners."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

After Rockefeller, it took more than twenty years for New York to elect another Republican governor. George Pataki has reintroduced the death penalty in the state, has fought, successfully, to end parole for violent felons, and has overseen the construction of thousands of new and particularly grim prison cells; far more consistently than Rockefeller, he has cultivated a reputation as being tough on crime. Nevertheless, Pataki recently announced a proposal to modify the drug laws, which have remained on the books, essentially unchanged, through two Democratic administrations. Pataki's proposal represents one of his boldest gestures in office—if, that is, it can be considered bold to suggest changing a set of laws that have been called racist, inhumane, and a hoax, and that no one really believes in anymore.

The Rockefeller drug laws were based on the notion that the criminal-justice process, like the poultry-processing process, can benefit from automation; they eliminate judges' discretion in sentencing anyone convicted of selling or, in many cases, even possessing "hard drugs," like heroin and cocaine. The mandatory sentences vary according to the weight of the drugs involved, but they quickly ratchet up, so that for the sale of two ounces the minimum sentence is fifteen years. Over time, this system has produced such a surfeit of appalling stories that they rarely even make news anymore. Most of them feature clueless women who, for one reason or another—often a failure to understand the system they were up against—refused to cop a plea. There is, for example, Elaine B., who got twenty years for delivering four ounces of cocaine; Donna C., also sentenced to twenty years for her first drug arrest; and, finally, Wanda C., who got sixteen and a half years for unwittingly facilitating an undercover cop's drug buy. (All three women were granted executive clemency after serving ten or more years.)



Nelson Rockefeller

That it has taken Albany politicians nearly three decades even to think about reconsidering the Rockefeller drug laws is all the more remarkable because the cost has been so high. The lengthy, mandatory sentences, as their critics predicted, have not measurably reduced the drug trade, even as they forced the state to build more and more prisons. Currently, there are some twenty-one thousand drug offenders locked up in New York. Almost all of them are black or Hispanic, and the vast majority have never been convicted of a violent crime. According to the Correctional Association of New York, housing these inmates costs state taxpayers more than seven hundred million dollars a year.

But bad laws have an inherently self-perpetuating quality: the same regrettable political calculations that went into passing them act as a powerful deterrent to change. Those in Albany who, on ideological grounds, should have pressed hardest for drug-law revision, like former Governor Mario Cuomo, generally stood to lose the most from championing it—Democrats are always vulnerable to being labelled "misguided soft-liners"—so they did nothing. Those on the other side had no particularly compelling reason to speak up; in fact, in many upstate Republican districts, prisons are considered a lucrative, if not terribly picturesque, form of economic development. As so often happens, partisan self-interest in this case produced not bitter public clashes but, rather, dulled indifference.

This year, thanks to Pataki, there will at least be debate over the Rockefeller drug laws. It is far from certain, however, what the debate will yield. Pataki's proposal reduces the minimum sentences for many drug crimes, but it leaves much of the basic mandatory system intact, and so falls short of genuine reform. There has been much speculation that one of Pataki's goals was to deprive his potential rivals, State Comptroller Carl McCall and former housing secretary Andrew Cuomo, of an issue that would increase minority voter turnout; now that the Governor has made the issue safe to talk about, however, many state legislators, particularly those representing minority districts, will doubtless push for broader changes. If the result is a standoff, New York could end up sentencing itself to another twenty-eight years of cruel and expensive inaction.

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

THE BENCH
THE PUFFY WATCH, DAY ONE

Celebrity trials change the city in little ways: they juice up the tabloids, they give coherence to the usually crime-scattered evening news, they transform otherwise not-so-noteworthy street corners into temporary landmarks. The courthouse is the primary attraction, of course; the lesser attractions change from day to day, as the celebrity on trial wanders out into the city, bestowing momentary celebrity-trial status on restaurants and stores. Last week, as the Sean (Puffy) Combs trial got under way, the first two celebrity-trial points of interest were the State Supreme Court building, on Centre Street, where Combs was being tried for bribery and for allegedly possessing a gun in a club, and Metronome, in the Flatiron District, a club where he was allegedly appearing as host.

At the courthouse, on the morning of the first day, photographers and TV cameramen formed a line behind police barricades. They were dressed in state-of-the-art fleece and Gore-Tex, and they stamped their feet to stay warm. By eleven o'clock, the line had moved only a few times. Once was when Andrea Shepard, the daughter half of the city's only mother-daughter courtroom-sketch team, came out of the courthouse and, for the benefit of the camera crews, propped up a new pastel drawing on a park bench. "There's not much you can do," Shepard said, critiquing her portrayal of Combs in court. "There are certain formulas in courtroom art, and opening statements are particularly difficult."

The other time the line moved was when Chao Chan, a scarf-and-hat peddler from Chinatown, passed by. The chilly people in line descended on Chan en masse.

"Oh, that's *you*, Carmine," one cameraman said to a colleague who was trying on a black fleece cap.

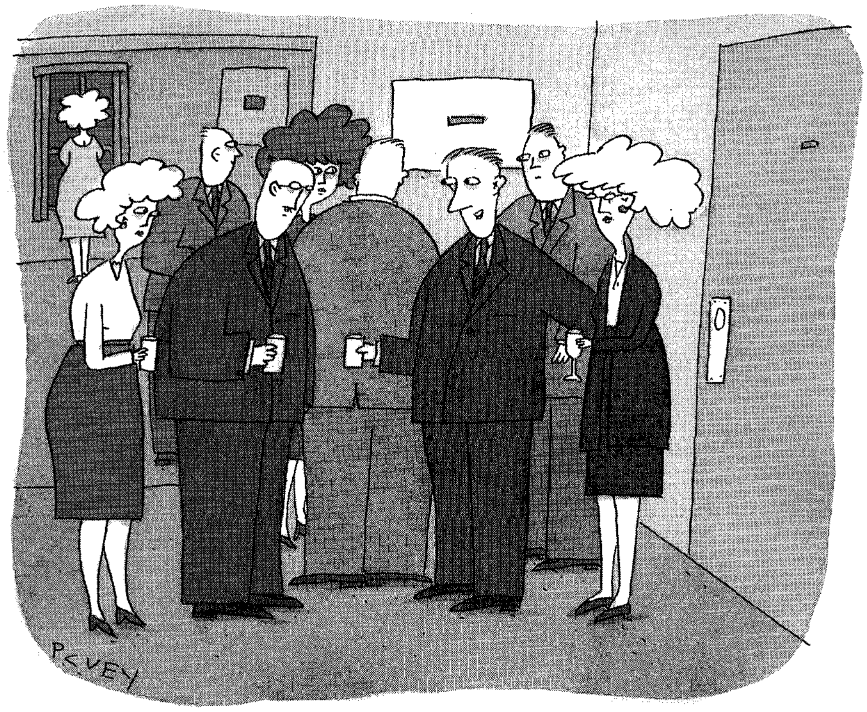
"It is?" Carmine replied.

"I'm not kidding, Carmine. That's *you*."

At noon, the line waiting to get a glimpse of Combs grew—an executive secretary from the next block, a French financial analyst on vacation, three men wearing shiny denim outfits from Combs's Sean John clothing line, and a guy from Brooklyn named Ike. A reporter asked the spectators one by one, "Do you think he had a gun?"

"They're gonna break for lunch soon," Ike said eagerly. "I know. I was in the system."

When the lunch break came, jury members and trial attendees streamed out. The court police asked spectators to clear a path for the TV crews so they could get a good shot of Johnnie Cochran, Combs's attorney. That's when people began to realize that Combs wasn't coming out. They stuck around for Cochran, then slowly dispersed.



"This is my wife—the founder and executive director of our marriage."

That night, a second Puff Daddy line formed at Metronome, at the corner of Twenty-first Street and Broadway, which was lit up by TV news crews—it looked like a corner in Times Square. Combs was holding a party for Dream, the all-teen-age-girl band. (He produced the group's début CD, "It Was All a Dream.") There were actually two lines outside Metronome: a line of people waiting to get into the Dream party and a line of people watching the line. Both lines were dominated by bodyguards: big, burly guys wearing long black leather jackets and watch caps, who, if you spoke to them, were invariably a lot nicer than you thought they would be. A half-dozen or so cops stood around chatting amiably among themselves and with Robert Balioni, Metronome's director of security. Balioni wore a suit, tie, and topcoat, and a radio earpiece.

For several hours, one of the few people in the spectators' line was a grandmother holding a poster of Puff Daddy, which she hoped to have autographed. By 9 P.M., as young women carrying cell phones got out of cabs and young men carrying cell phones got out of S.U.V.s, she started worrying. "I don't know if he's gonna come," she said. "The group's already in there. I mean, what's the point if he's not in there?" Just then, another S.U.V. pulled up. "Maybe this is him," the grandmother said hopefully. "He uses that kind of car."

It wasn't him, nor did he emerge from a BMW convertible that arrived a minute later, driven by two men in tight V-neck sweaters and cowboy boots. At around ten o'clock, a couple of teen-age boys walked up and tried unsuccessfully to get into Metronome to see the members of Dream. Then two men named David Peel and Tom Doyle happened by and lingered for a while to find out why all the TV news trucks were there. "Hey," Doyle said. "You want to hear a coincidence? I went to the same high school as Puff Daddy—Mount St. Michael, in the Bronx. I graduated in '69. He graduated in the eighties, I think."

Peel and Doyle said that in the seventies they used to play in the Plastic Ono Band. Peel displayed his business card: a photo of himself with John Lennon and Yoko Ono. "You want to hear another coincidence?" he asked. "Jennifer Lopez—J.L. John Lennon—J.L."

At ten o'clock, the Fox 5 news reporter went live from across the street. He stared into the camera and said, "He's a no-show." At ten-fifteen, the grandmother rolled up her poster and left. By eleven o'clock, all the TV cameras were gone and the corner was once again illuminated only by street lights.

Not long afterward, Balioni said, "Ten-four. Ten-four. I copy," then ran toward the front door of the club. A white stretch limo pulled up, and Balioni cleared a path as the members of Dream—Holly, Melissa, Ashley, and Diana—were escorted into the limo, along with several bodyguards. A few more bodyguards loaded Dream's framed gold records into the trunk, and the limo drove off. The two teen-age boys hailed a cab and followed.

—Robert Sullivan

DEPT. OF COFFEE BREAKS
A POD OF ONE'S OWN

For a firm that insists on making architecture out of repurposed industrial containers, the New York-based company LOT/EK manages to get a surprising number of its projects built. This probably has something to do with the infectious zeal and canny determination with which the firm's partners, Ada Tolla and Giuseppe Lignano, pursue their "investigations" into the interior life of objects that were never intended for human habitation.

In 1999, LOT/EK used the tanker from an oil truck to create a sleeping loft in a West Village apartment. (The tank was cut in half and lifted through the window by crane.) Last year, Tolla and Lignano integrated a truck's cargo hold into the design of an apartment in Midtown. They're presently at work on a student pavilion at the University of Washington that will occupy a salvaged airplane fuselage. Their dream, inspired by a visit to Port Newark, is to build mobile apartment units using stackable shipping containers. "That would be so incredible," Tolla said the other day, her nostrils flaring with excitement.

LOT/EK's most recent creation, the Inspiro-Tainer, is a movable, modular privacy pod for the modern open-plan workplace—a refuge for people who work in offices without walls. It is made from one of those thirty-square-foot aluminum-sided cargo containers in which luggage is stored on airplanes. The space, which is about the size of an elevator, contains a movie screen and projector, a DVD player, a computer, and a touch-screen interface that operates all the gizmos and moving parts. It has been outfitted with a steel work surface and a padded, reclinable steel seat. The interior is lined with thick blue acoustic foam, for soundproofing. Sitting inside it is a little like being in a diving bell, deep beneath the ocean. Tolla describes it as "a work station in which you can relax and dream."

The piece is part of an exhibition entitled "Workspheres," which opens this week at the Museum of Modern Art; LOT/EK is one of six design teams that were commissioned by the museum to create work environments that suit the way people use the office today. "We all know the lines between work and play have blurred," Paola Antonelli, the show's curator, said last week. "But office design doesn't often reflect that."

Some of the entries in the show are likely to remain conceptual—like Martí Guixé's "H!Bye" project, which consists of twenty-one different pills that supposedly help employees slip into and out of various mental states. (The "Concentration Is Everywhere" pill is hard and doesn't dissolve in your mouth; the "Go Crazy" pill contains metal that reacts with your fillings.) Other entries resemble the sort of gimmicks you might find at the Sharper Image. The Inspiro-Tainer is somewhere in between. It sounds outlandish, but, once you're inside, it makes perfect sense.

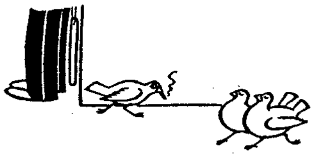
Tolla was at MOMA last Tuesday, dressed in baggy pants and a purple turtleneck, supervising the crew that was putting the Inspiro-Tainer together. She paused to give a visitor an early run-through. Tolla, who, like her partner, is from Naples, is a youthful-looking thirty-seven, and her warm Italian manner and matter-of-fact approach to problem-solving are not at all what you'd expect from a conceptual architect. She and Lignano met in Italy while they were in high school, moved to New York in 1991, and started LOT/EK a year later, establishing their office in the meat-packing district, a container paradise. After a number of lean years, during which they worked with objects found on the street—they made a chair out of a canvas-sided mail cart and an entertainment center out of an abandoned refrigerator—they now have more work than they can handle.

The visitor climbed into the Inspiro-Tainer, and Tolla closed the door behind him. "Watch your fingers," she said. What might have seemed claustrophobic felt nice and snug instead. The visitor had entered the Inspiro-Tainer wondering why two talented architects would make life so difficult for themselves. Why didn't Tolla and Lignano just chuck the whole concept of building with containers and use more conventional materials? But once he was inside, the question disappeared in a mist of heightened possibilities. The occupant was no longer an ordinary worker—he was an executive stowaway.

—*John Seabrook*

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

SOME PIGEON!



Up until the time Mingala West, a Burmese restaurant at 325 Amsterdam Avenue, near Seventy-fifth Street, closed, a year and a half ago, a pigeon would walk up to the place almost every evening, right before sunset. It came to the door, sometimes gently tapping its beak on the glass, sometimes waiting patiently on the sidewalk. In most respects, the pigeon was unremarkable. But, because it so often lingered outside, the staff at the restaurant, most of them exiles from Burma, began letting it in. Without hesitating, the pigeon would head for a stairwell at the back and descend, one stair at a time, until it reached a landing, where it would rest its head against the wall and close its eyes. Its expression was so pained that patrons passing on the way to the rest rooms often thought that it was dying. Sometimes they said something. "No, it's O.K.," the waiters would respond; they were used to it. In the morning, the pigeon waited by the door, ready to go back outside.

The Burmese, of course, are predominantly Buddhists, and Buddhists believe in reincarnation. To the Mingala West staff, a pigeon that asked, in its own way, to spend the night in the restaurant was without a doubt the reincarnation of someone who had some connection to the premises. Hence they had no choice but to let it in. "It's like a sign," Kyaw Tha Hla, one of the restaurant's owners, said a while back. "It acts almost human. It's another living being. What can you do? You just let it go to sleep."

New York storefronts, as it happens, are constantly undergoing reincarnations of their own. And it was Kyaw Tha Hla who recalled that 325 Amsterdam Avenue, in a previous life, had housed a sushi restaurant called Nishi. The place was opened in the early eighties by a Japanese man and his American partner, who occasionally arranged meetings there for psychics. Nishi offered fusion food, mixing Japanese and Western influences—such as the Hot Fuji, which was essentially a hot-fudge sundae. For a time, the restaurant prospered. But in 1989 the American died, and the business began to falter. The surviving partner closed Nishi in 1990. Enter the Burmese.

Mingala West opened on January 27, 1991, a date deemed auspicious by a Burmese astrologer. In order to be ready in time for the opening, the new owners rushed renovations and neglected to hold a *pay-ate*, a traditional Buddhist ceremony, in which a monk performs a blessing to cast out lingering spirits. According to Kyaw Tha Hla, that may have left open a door through which the karmic force of life—including, perhaps, the spirit of the deceased Nishi owner, in the body of a pigeon—could pass. If so, he was fortunate to have found Buddhists at the door. "I'm glad it was us who took over, because maybe another person would just shoo him away," Kyaw Tha Hla said.

Mingala West never made much money; its owners kept it going for nine years largely to provide a meeting place for Burmese dissidents and exiles in New York. But when the lease ran out, in 1999, and the landlord doubled the rent, Mingala West quietly closed. The space remained vacant for eighteen months. Mingala West regulars and Kyaw Tha Hla himself occasionally passed the bare storefront and wondered about the pigeon, but no one ever saw it.

Now a new tenant has moved into 325 Amsterdam Avenue: Gotham Gardens, a flower shop run by two men, Kevin Esteban and Dan Dahl. Like the previous tenants, they like animals and believe in the spirit world. Esteban's terrier, Maggie, accompanies him to work each day. When they moved in, Dahl found some old oil paintings the Burmese had left behind under the stairwell, and decided not to throw them out, because, he said, "it would be really bad karma."

On the flower shop's opening day, in late December, something unusual happened. "I had the door open, and a pigeon was walking around out front and wanted to come in," Esteban recalled recently. The pigeon loitered there for a while. But, deterred by Maggie's presence, it wouldn't cross the threshold. It hasn't been seen since.

—*Sheridan Prasso*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
HOW TO PAY FOR POWER AND MAKE POWER PAY

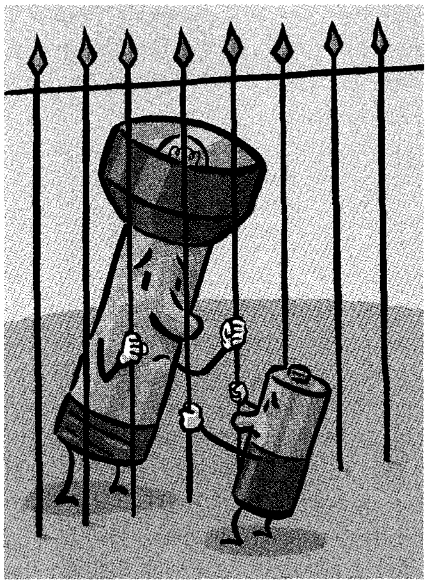
Five years ago, one of the biggest states in America decided to open up its electricity market to competition. The state, figuring that the presence of more competitors would lead to lower prices, broke up local monopolies and invited companies from all over to try to sell their power to households and businesses. Consumers worried, though, that lifting all regulations might send prices through the roof, so the state capped the prices that companies could charge. What the state ended up with was not pure deregulation but a neither-fish-nor-fowl mix of free markets and government intervention.

We all know now that this is the story of California. And we know that it ended badly: with a plague of rolling blackouts, a rash of potential bankruptcies, and a boom in battery sales and lame light-bulb jokes. But it also happens to be the tale of another state; namely, Pennsylvania. That one ended very differently. Consumers in Pennsylvania have saved $2.84 billion over the past three years. Power companies have flocked to the state. The competition has lowered prices and increased efficiency, just as the textbooks say it should.

California's woes have supposedly shown us that what's often called "partial deregulation" is doomed to fail. You have to do things one way or the other: either stick with the old system of regulated monopolies or let the unfettered market work its magic. In fact, when it comes to electricity, partial deregulation works just fine, if you do it right.

The two states took a broadly similar approach to deregulation: just as you have one phone line but plenty of different long-distance companies offering you service, you'd have one power line but a plethora of power companies offering electricity. Yet if the broad approach was similar, the details were not. And the details made all the difference.

Price caps, for instance, have become the most popular scapegoat in the California debacle. In California today, utilities buy electricity wholesale from other companies' power plants. Those utilities are now near bankruptcy because they're paying outrageous prices for that wholesale power and are not allowed to pass any of the costs along to customers. Yet Pennsylvania, too, has price caps, and it's prospering. Again, the details matter: California set its caps at a ridiculously low level (at a time when power was very cheap), while Pennsylvania made sure that the caps were high enough to give power suppliers wiggle room. Thanks to competition, most suppliers there charge significantly less than the cap, but, if their costs rise, they can raise prices some without breaking the law. The cap is low enough to prevent price-gouging but high enough to make the market attractive to new power producers. If you promise profit, they will come.



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Pennsylvania took the same kind of balanced approach to the utility companies, like P. P. L. and PECO, that used to be the state's sole providers of electricity. Although these companies faced a horde of new competitors in making power, they still own the power lines that run into people's houses, just as the local phone company owns the phone line in your house. That raised the possibility that they might use their control of the lines to help themselves and hurt their competitors. In California, this fear prompted the state to make the existing utility companies sell off all their generating plants. But that put them completely at the mercy of the market: once wholesale power prices started going up, they had no way of making power for themselves. Pennsylvania, by contrast, let the utilities hold on to their power plants, if they wanted to, while keeping a close watch to prevent any chicanery. The fact that a hundred and thirty companies are competing with the established utilities there is evidence enough that this was the right approach.

Pennsylvania also protected the utilities by allowing them to sign long-term contracts that helped them hedge against price spikes. The thing about electricity, unlike other commodities, is that you can't have even a momentary interruption of supply without everything going haywire. So it's essential to insure that you always have a large enough supply. With long-term contracts, you can lock in that supply at a good price. In California, the utilities can buy power only on a day-to-day basis, which means that when supply is low prices soar.

Pennsylvania did a lot of smaller things right, too. It crafted a high-pressure advertising campaign, called ElectriChoice, to make consumers aware that they could switch power providers. As a result, more people in Pennsylvania have switched than in any other state in America. And Pennsylvania joined with several other mid-Atlantic states to form a giant regional power grid, which makes it easier and cheaper for Pennsylvania companies to buy and sell electricity. Now more companies than ever before are generating power in the state; over the next five years it could have as much as fifty per cent more capacity than it does today.

California's disastrous experiment with deregulation has been widely derided as a jury-rigged hodgepodge. But Pennsylvania, using a similar approach, managed to encourage competition without plunging its citizens into darkness. The fact that it pulled off what California muffed so badly proves that there's nothing wrong with a jury-rigged hodgepodge, as long as it's the right jury-rigged hodgepodge.

—*James Surowiecki*

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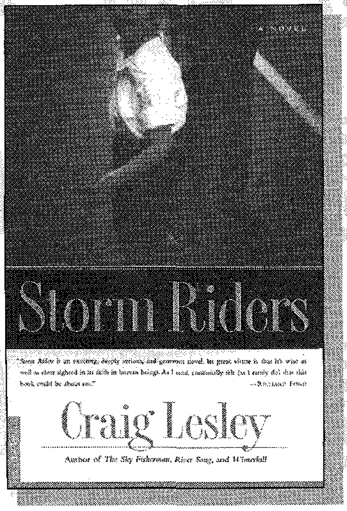

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LETTER FROM EUZKADI

HOME FIRES

Basque separatists are escalating their war against Spain.

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

Fernando Savater is a philosopher. He taught ethics for several years at a university in the Basque city of San Sebastián, near the French border, and in 1995 he and his wife moved to Madrid, where he is now on the faculty of the Universidad Complutense, one of the oldest and most distinguished schools in Spain. The Savaters are avid admirers of horror movies. Their apartment in a drab high-rise in downtown Madrid is cluttered with kitschy mementos, including little plastic models of Godzilla and Frankenstein's monster and the Ichabod Crane character played by Johnny Depp in Tim Burton's "Sleepy Hollow."

Savater is a short middle-aged man with a bushy beard that is turning gray. He wears glasses with large, salmon-colored frames, and when I met him at home one Sunday morning a few weeks ago he was dressed in slippers and a blue-and-white checked bathrobe. We sat and talked next to a painted wooden statue of Tintin. Savater smoked a pipe and told me about a trip he had taken to Tokyo recently to attend an important horse race. He has just finished a book that is a sort of social and political commentary on the Kentucky Derby, Ascot, Longchamps, the Dubai World Cup, and several other races. Since his daily routine in Madrid is severely constrained, the occasional trips abroad are important to him. He was still in his bathrobe that Sunday, he said, because he had locked himself in for the weekend. It embarrasses him to make his bodyguards work every day. His wife was away and he had left his tranquillizers in his office or somewhere, but he was doing without them until Monday.

Fernando Savater has been in what he calls "internal exile" for five years. He is designated for assassination by ETA (Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna, "Basque Homeland and Freedom"), the separatist group that has been carrying out political murders since 1968. ETA's attacks on its critics have been brutal, and some seven hundred and fifty people in Spain are under police protection similar to Savater's. "You stop doing certain things," he said, "like walking in the park or going out for a drink, because it doesn't seem right to put your bodyguards' lives in danger for such frivolous reasons."

Savater writes about Basque separatism and terrorism frequently in *El País*, and he appears on panels and on television. Last February, he helped found a loosely organized "civic-action group," Basta Ya! ("Enough Already"). The group took its name from a slogan that arose spontaneously during demonstrations all over Spain in 1997, following the abduction of a young politician, Miguel Ángel Blanco. ETA announced that it would kill him within forty-eight hours unless the government agreed to let imprisoned members of ETA serve their sentences in facilities situated in the Basque provinces. The government refused to move the prisoners, and ETA murdered Miguel Ángel Blanco. Since then, there have been demonstrations after each ETA killing. "The purpose of Basta Ya!," Savater said to me, "is not to mobilize in reaction to deaths, although our members attend the demonstrations, but to affirm support for democracy and the Spanish constitution." In December, he represented Basta Ya! in Strasbourg, where the organization was awarded the Sakharov Prize for the defense of human rights by the European Parliament.

Savater grew up in San Sebastián, a resort town that is the capital of Guipúzcoa, the easternmost of the three Basque Country provinces in Spain, but his mother was from Granada and his father from Madrid. "I don't have Basque DNA," he said to me. He was making an ironic reference to the late-nineteenth-century ideas of racial purity promulgated by the founders of Basque nationalism, but he was also thinking about an argument he got into with a member of the European Parliament at the dinner

CLEMENTE BERNAD/CONTRASTO/MATRIX

after the award ceremony in Strasbourg. She was interested in the case that is made for the biological separateness of the Basques, and she pointed out that they have the highest percentage of Type-O and Rh-negative blood in the world. He said that this didn't matter: "In Europe, we resolve problems with elections, not blood tests." Savater thinks that the Basques' belief in an exclusive national identity, "with a little Guevara and Fanon thrown in," fuels terrorism. "The Basque problem is not so complex," he said. "It is a matter of a minority group trying to impose itself on a majority."

María San Gil also lives with bodyguards—four of them. Gil is the lieutenant mayor of San Sebastián and the president of the Partido Popular in Guipúzcoa. The P.P. is the party of José María Aznar, the conservative Spanish Prime Minister. ETA tried to kill Aznar with a car bomb in 1995, and after he became Prime Minister the following year he toughened the country's anti-terrorism laws and officially refused to negotiate with ETA.

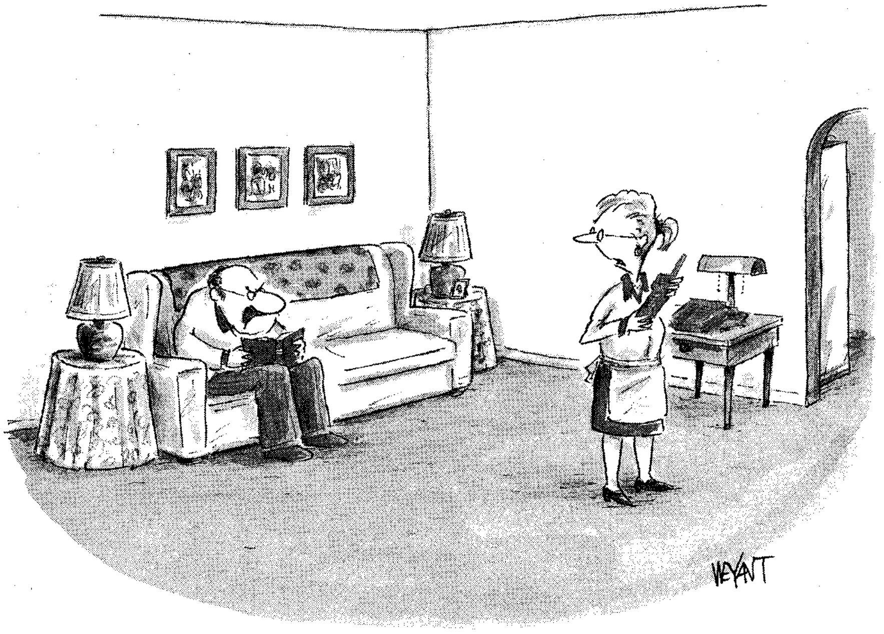
I met María San Gil in Bilbao early in January. She had driven over from San Sebastián, which is about two hours away. The day before, she had participated in a ceremony at the tomb of a P.P. official who was killed by ETA in 1998. The occasion went as planned, but anonymous phone calls alerted the police to the fact that a bomb had been planted in the cemetery, although it had not gone off. Several hours later, five kilos of dynamite were found concealed under the dirt and flowers in an urn. The dynamite had been used to make a type of bomb that is often triggered by a telephone call. A cell phone is left next to the bomb, and the call sets it off. In this case, the police activated the bomb in a "controlled" explosion that destroyed more than three hundred tombs and, as *El País* reported, "also brought human remains to the surface, which were left lying all over the ground."

San Gil is thirty-six, thin and attractive, with well-cut short brown hair. She is married and has two young children. Her father was Spanish and her mother Basque, and she was born and raised in San Sebastián. "I feel absolutely Basque, proudly Basque, but I also feel very Spanish," she says. She got involved in politics five years ago, when she was working as a secretary for a P.P. official and witnessed his murder. I met her at P.P. headquarters after passing through several security checkpoints. "It's pretty crazy here today," one of her aides said apologetically. "Our nerves are all shot." It turned out that during the ceremony the day before, San Gil had been leaning against the tomb where the bomb was stashed.

"Knowing that I could have gone flying through the air . . ." San Gil said. "It's different somehow from knowing that you are on ETA's hit list." Her hands were trembling, and she was chain-smoking Chesterfield Lights. "I'm a bit shaken. It's like understanding that if you smoke you might get cancer and then suddenly you are told that you have it." The cemetery bomb was the second attempt at mass murder by ETA in less than a month. On December 18th, a bomb was placed in an elevator in the journalism department of the university in Bilbao. That bomb, which was intended for a woman on the faculty, also failed to go off because of a technical glitch, but if it had it could have become the most lethal attack ever staged by ETA—worse even than the

¡¡BASTA YA!!
rebaja

After every political murder by Basque separatists, thousands of people all over Spain turn out for demonstrations against violence.



"It's your mother. She wants to remind you again just how difficult and painful your birth was."

massacre of twenty-one people in a supermarket in Barcelona in 1987.

I asked San Gil what she thought ETA was trying to achieve with the bomb in the cemetery. "It would have been a drama of huge dimensions," she said. The father, two sisters, and the widow of the murdered politician who was being commemorated were there. "It would have been terrible. And it would have killed the leaders of the P.P. in Guipúzcoa province. The Party would have vanished. Almost all of us were there. ETA hates us. It's as if they have rabies. They are fanatics. They have totally different values from the majority of people."

María San Gil believes that ETA is able to exist because of the complicity of more moderate Basque leaders, particularly those in the Partido Nacionalista Vasco, P.N.V.—the Basque Nationalist Party—which has been campaigning for Basque autonomy since 1895 and has led the regional government since 1980. Under the constitution written in 1978, three years after Franco's death, the Basques were given the right to elect a president, the *lehendakari;* to have their own police force; and to teach their language, Euskera, in schools. In exchange, they accepted limitations on Basque nationalist aspirations, including the right to hold a referendum that might alter the status of the Basque provinces as integral parts of Spain.

In the fall of 1998, the Partido Nacionalista Vasco helped broker a ceasefire with ETA and entered into a political alliance with Euskal Herritarok, a coalition of extreme nationalist groups that include ETA's "political wing." When the ceasefire ended, late in 1999, and ETA began killing people again, the P.N.V. severed its ties with Euskal Herritarok, but it continues to insist that negotiations with ETA are necessary. The Aznar government disagrees. "The solution to the problem is, first, the political defeat of the P.N.V.," María San Gil told me, "and then effective police action against the terrorists. I say no to dialogue with ETA, because they'll arrive at the table with pistols in their hands. If they put down their guns, we can talk about whatever they like—the color of their cells, the thickness of the bars on their cells, the quality of the food—but until then nothing."

Many Basque nationalists believe that the Partido Popular's position is rooted in the Spanish ultranationalism that characterized Franco's regime. (Aznar is the son of a former Franco official and the protégé of a politician who was a minister under Franco.) Following Franco's death, most Spaniards shared this impression of the P.P., but in 1996 Aznar managed to unseat the Socialists, who had held power since 1982. Aznar kept his government just to the right of center, and last year he won a landslide reëlection. He had to make concessions to Spain's autonomous governments in return for votes, however, and he would like to counter this by increasing the P.P.'s power in traditional nationalist bastions like the Basque provinces. Elections are tentatively scheduled for later this year.

Euzkadi, which is the Basques' word for their homeland, encompasses four Spanish provinces and three adjacent districts in southwestern France. The autonomous region on the Spanish side has a population of two million, about sixty per cent of whom support the idea of greater self-determination. Very few of them support ETA's violent campaign for sovereignty, but they have learned to coexist with the violence. This has become more difficult to do, however, because the rate of murders has increased recently and the targets have become bigger. Since January, 2000, after rearming and putting a new, more hard-line leadership in place, ETA has killed twenty-four people. Its latest strategy, the "socialization of suffering," is intended to insure that all Basques, and not just the members of ETA (more than five hundred of whom are incarcerated), share the pain.

One day I arranged to meet a Basque friend at my hotel in Bilbao. He arrived later than expected, and explained that he had been delayed by an urgent summons from an old family friend, a businessman in his early seventies. He had gone to the man's home and found him in a state of extreme anxiety. The man had just received a letter demanding a "contribution" of seven million pesetas, about forty thousand dollars, "on behalf of the struggle for the independence of the Basque people." My friend said that hundreds of others—including low-rung professionals and small shopkeepers—have received similar letters from ETA in recent months. In August, a businessman who was a well-known proponent of Basque self-determination was killed because he hadn't paid his war tax. ETA has also expanded its hit list to include journalists and academics. Last spring, a reporter for the right-wing daily paper *El Mundo* was murdered, and there have been attempts on the lives of half a dozen other journalists. The campaign to bring the war home to Euzkadi is helped along by youth gangs, the Kale Borroka, which swarm into the business districts of Bilbao and San Sebastián and other towns to vandalize banks, destroy mailboxes, burn cars, and do battle with the police.

Guernica, the symbolic capital of Euzkadi, lies about twelve miles east of Bilbao on a narrow tidal estuary that extends inland from the Bay of Biscay. Guernica is not much larger now than it was on the day in April of 1937 when it was repeatedly bombed and strafed on Franco's behalf by German bombers. More than a thousand civilians were killed, and most of the town was turned into a scorched ruin. It has been carefully restored, and still has narrow streets and houses of only one or two stories.

The Tree of Guernica, the emblem of Basque autonomy, survived the bombing. The original Tree, an oak that was several hundred years old, died in 1860, and the present Tree was planted then, on a knoll at the edge of town. For five hundred years, beginning in 1371, Spanish rulers came to stand under the Tree and confirm Euzkadi's autonomous rights and privileges. (The special rights of the French Basques ended with the French Revolution.) These rights were documented in *fueros*, or charters. The *fueros* were rescinded in 1876, restored briefly in the thirties, before Franco came to power, and partially restored again after his death, when Spain's new constitution was written.

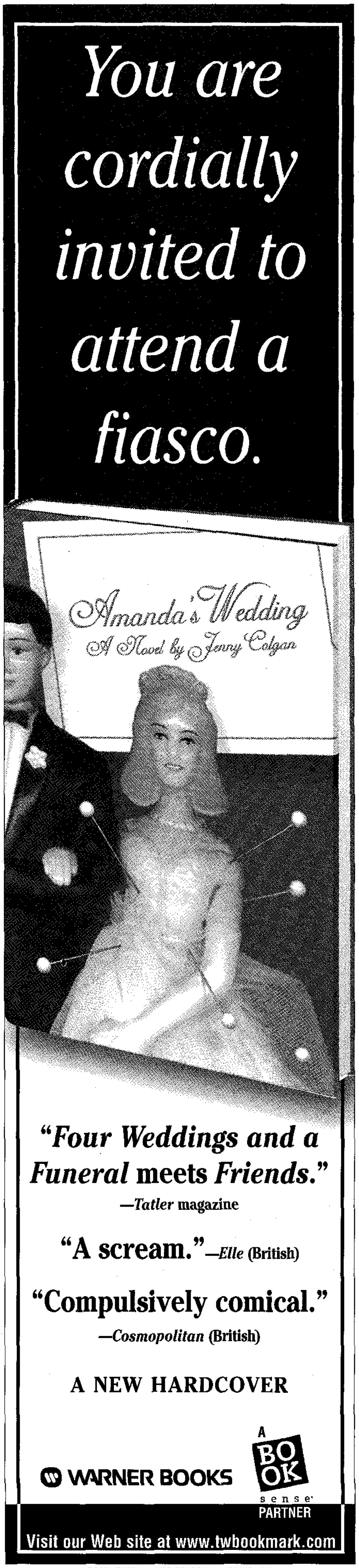
An elegant limestone meetinghouse with colonnades and a domed roof was built next to the Tree in 1826, and various Basque nationalist groups gather there regularly. I was invited to a special meeting by Txema Montero, a prominent Basque lawyer in his late forties. Montero drove me to Guernica in his black BMW sedan. On the way, he said that Juan José Ibarretxe, the *lehendakari* of the Basque regional government and a leader of the Partido Nacionalista Vasco, planned to issue a call for peace. Unfortunately, both the Partido Popular and ETA's political ally, Euskal Herritarok, were boycotting the meeting. Aznar had condemned it as a Basque-nationalist propaganda exercise, and ETA viewed it as a gesture of appeasement. "Mao said that you had to swim like a fish in the water," Montero said, "and the Spaniards believe that they must drain the water to finish off the fish. Nationalism is the water, and the fish is ETA."

In the mid-nineteen-eighties, Txema Montero represented ETA in secret peace talks in Algiers with the Socialist government of Felipe González. Montero says that they had reached a deal, but then the government stalled and ETA withdrew from the talks. Around the same time, it became widely known that the death squads in the "dirty war" being waged against the Basques were made up of Spanish policemen and French mercenaries operating on the orders of senior security officials in the González administration. Montero remained closely allied with ETA until 1992, when he was publicly repudiated for writing an article condemning the group's use of violence.

Montero has a private law practice now, and a position at a think tank funded by the Partido Nacionalista Vasco. "I don't know exactly what it means today to be a Basque," he said to me. "But I do know that the majority of the Basque people want more political power. So why shouldn't we be allowed, in some future election, to vote on whether or not to have a referendum?" He thinks the answer is, in part, that the Aznar government fears that a referendum on Basque self-determination would lead to similar demands from other autonomous regions, like Catalonia and Galicia.

We parked and walked to the meetinghouse, where a large group of men and women—including many who were old enough to remember the bombing of Guernica—stood watching the guests arrive. Several of them called out to Txema Montero in Euskera, and he waved. The *lehendakari*—a man in his mid-forties with very white skin, intense brown eyes, and a balding pate, like that of a Capuchin monk—was standing next to the venerable Tree, bathed in light from the lamps of a TV crew. Inside the hall, five rows of red seats wound steeply around an oval amphitheatre. There were stained-glass windows at the base of the dome. On the walls, several gilt-framed paintings of feudal lords from Vizcaya, the province in which Guernica is situated, hung with their oaths of allegiance written in large Gothic letters on plaques beneath them.

Everyone stood and clapped when the *lehendakari* walked in and took his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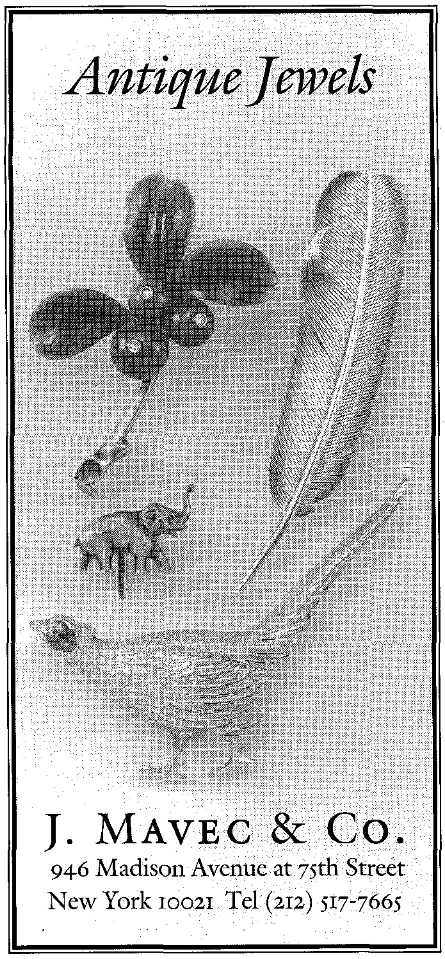

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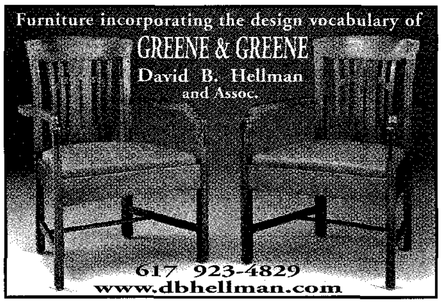

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place at a wooden podium in front of two ornate candelabras and a tapestry of the Tree of Guernica. He said a few words of welcome in Spanish and then paused. The speech of reconciliation he had prepared had been overtaken by events. It was his sad duty, he said, to announce that just a few hours earlier ETA had murdered a young traffic policeman in Barcelona.

The *lehendakari* asked for five minutes of silence, during which I peered around at the crowd. People were chewing their lips and frowning, and one woman seemed about to cry. Then the *lehendakari* gave his speech, first in Spanish and then in Euskera. "It isn't worth it to keep on living like this," he said at one point.

ETA does not recruit its members from a disenfranchised indigenous underclass like the one that feeds the I.R.A. in Northern Ireland. It is made up largely of the offspring of middle-class families from one of the most prosperous regions of Spain. The Basque government has invested heavily in public services, and the Basques are among the best-educated people in the Iberian Peninsula. The level of unemployment is low, and pro-business policies have encouraged a wide range of multinational companies, such as Rolls-Royce, G.E., Daewoo, and Ericsson, to establish plants in the region.

I went for a drive in the countryside outside Bilbao one day with a Basque friend, Alberto Letona, who works as a producer for a television station owned by the regional government. We drove out of town through the working-class neighborhoods clustered along the west bank of the Nervión River, which bisects the city on its way to the Bay of Biscay. Smoke-stained apartment buildings and terraced cottages abut abandoned or nearly abandoned steel mills, docks, and shipyards—vestiges of the old industrial economy. Downtown, to the south, wide brick sidewalks are flanked by fin-de-siècle stone buildings with distinctive glass-fronted balconies. The main shopping street has trendy boutiques, bookshops, cafés, and a Marks & Spencer department store. Most of the curving glass entrances to the city's new subway system, which were designed by Norman Foster, are in this area. El Goog, which is how the locals refer to Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum building, glistens near one of the main bridges, surrounded by cranes at the many construction sites in the neighborhood.

The Basque Country is wet and green, like Ireland. Rainclouds are constantly obscuring the small patches of blue sky, and on this day a leaden cloud cover moved over us permanently. On a misty green plateau high above the town, craters left by open-faced iron mines—Bilbao's first industry—were covered by scrub and tall grass. A few long-haired Basque ponies roamed here and there. In the plaza at Gallarta, the village where Dolores Ibarruri, La Pasionaria, was born, two young teachers from Bilbao were talking to a group of high-school students in bright-colored parkas and sneakers who had come from the city on a field trip. Alberto explained that they were being given a lecture on the history of the area, and about life in the mines. The teachers were speaking in Euskera, which is guttural and clicky and full of "X"s. It was totally incomprehensible to me, as it is to most outsiders, including Spaniards.

Euskera is not an Indo-European language and bears no relation to any other known tongue. It seems to have originated among the primitive Basques and not to have been tainted by the languages of adjacent peoples. During much of Franco's tenure, it was against the law to speak Euskera in public or to teach it, but after he died and the regional government was established, Euskera-only schools, *ikastolak*, were officially recognized. Many Spaniards and non-nationalist Basques see the *ikastolak* as breeding grounds for Basque extremism. Alberto, who describes himself as a moderate Basque nationalist, said that he and his friends resented the Spanish campaign against Euskera. "I'm happy to live within a federal Spain," he said, "although with more concessions to Basque autonomy. But the increasingly anti-Basque sentiments coming out of Madrid make me want to just go my own way and to hell with them."

We drove back to the east side of the river and passed through the neighborhoods of Las Arenas and Neguri, where Bilbao's wealthy families settled in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution. Their grand nineteenth-century mansions with gated gardens stand next to new, upscale apartment buildings. After an hour or so, we arrived in Bermeo, an old whaling town in a cove surrounded by steep, forested hills. Most of its small fleet of fishing trawlers—a couple of dozen red, green, and blue wooden boats with low gunwales and high, perky, ocean-going prows—were sitting at anchor in the stone harbor. A large brick building next to the harbor housed a bar and an indoor court for pelota, the handball game invented by the Basques. Two young men with the physiques of rugby players were practicing for a tournament. An older man wearing a cloth cap stood to one side watching them. He began speaking in Euskera, but for my sake switched to Spanish. One of the players was his son, he said, the past pelota champion of the entire Basque country. This was the original Basque pelota, the man explained, the most difficult kind, played without gloves, just tape on the hands. We watched as the two younger men, who were sweating heavily, took their turns catching the ball—a hard thing the size of a baseball—and then whacking it against the pockmarked brick wall at the far end of the court.

At the small restaurant where we went for lunch, everyone spoke Euskera. A pamphlet denouncing human-rights abuses committed against ETA prisoners lay on the table. There were grainy black-and-white photographs of torture victims, as well as pictures of Basques who had been killed by the government-sponsored death squads in the nineteen-eighties. One gruesome photograph that caught my eye showed a woman lying prone, evidently dead, with her head in a barbed-wire fence. I mentioned to Alberto that it had probably been taken during the Spanish Civil War. "I guess the idea is to show the long history of abuses by Spain," he said. After lunch, as we walked through the narrow streets to the car, Alberto translated the words on a large banner that was hanging from the town hall. "Euskal Presoak—Euskal Herria" was written in red letters: "Bring the Prisoners Home to the Basque Country." As we walked on, I saw that there were dozens of similar banners hanging from balconies. "Bermeo is known as a very nationalistic town," Alberto said.

We left the coast and drove inland, into the hills. After getting lost on a grid of new roads that took us through a subdivision of summer chalets, we found the track leading to the farmhouse, or *caserío,* that had been owned by Alberto's family for most of the twentieth century. The *caserío* is a metaphor for the Basque homeland, and Alberto's family had sold theirs in the late seventies, when his aged relatives moved to apartments in Bilbao. It was, I could see, typical—a large two-story building with ivory-colored limestone walls and a red-tiled roof. It sat alone in a sloping field under a small forested hill. Alberto walked onto the property and stood with his back to me. "All of that was my grandfather's," he said. "And that was where my grandmother used to plant potatoes." After several minutes like this, he sighed and walked back to the car. As we drove away, he said that recently he had been looking for an old *caserío* to buy for his own family, but the prices were too high. He had been shown a ruined one that cost three hundred thousand dollars.

Just as the afternoon light began to fade, we broke through a densely forested area and began descending into a small cove on the bay. Filling the space where the beach used to be was a rectangular concrete structure the size of a football field. It had two squat funnels on its roof, and a mess of high-tension lines and pylons stretched away from it inland. There was old construction debris on the roadside around us, and some rusting loops of barbed wire. This was the Lemoniz nuclear power plant, Alberto said. Franco had intended it to be the first of several such installations in the Basque Country, but there were large-scale protests against it. ETA mounted attacks on the plant, and in 1978 two workers were killed by a bomb. Three years later, ETA kidnapped and murdered an engineer there, and the government finally decided to halt construction. Alberto said that ETA's opposition to the Lemoniz nuclear facility was one of its most effective and popular operations.

ETA is estimated to have about two hundred active members today—people who carry out the bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations—and a support network of perhaps two thousand collaborators who provide transportation, rent safe houses, and run errands. The members, who have noms de guerre like Mobutu, Qaddafi, and Tintin, usually

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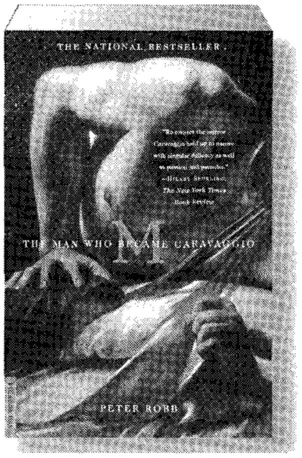

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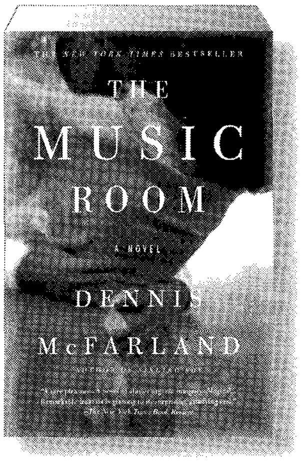

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work in three-person cells that are part of regional "commands." The commands communicate with the ETA leadership, a collective that is believed to be based in France and Switzerland, via a complicated system in which messages are relayed through a number of people. ETA's communiqués to the public often appear first in a Bilbao daily newspaper, *Gara*, which is published in Euskera and Spanish.

ETA describes itself as being aligned with other "liberation struggles," like the Polisario Front's war for the independence of Moroccan-held Western Sahara and the efforts of the stateless Turkish Kurds to gain a homeland. In the Bilbao office of Euskal Herritarok, the legal, aboveground party that speaks for ETA, there are posters of Che Guevara, the Zapatistas' Subcomandante Marcos, and the late Nicaraguan revolutionary Augusto César Sandino. During the nineteen-eighties, some ETA members volunteered for duty in Latin America's Marxist guerrilla insurgencies, but they were rarely noticed by journalists or other outsiders. I met a couple of them in 1991, when I was staying with the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación in El Salvador. Olga, a former factory worker from Bilbao, spent her mornings under a large tree with a couple of assistants, making political leaflets and posters. A burly man I knew as Alberto oversaw the guerrillas' explosives factory, a crude bivouac where a half-dozen young, battle-mutilated men made land mines and booby traps they called *quitapiés* and *vuela-huevos* ("foot-takers" and "ball-busters").

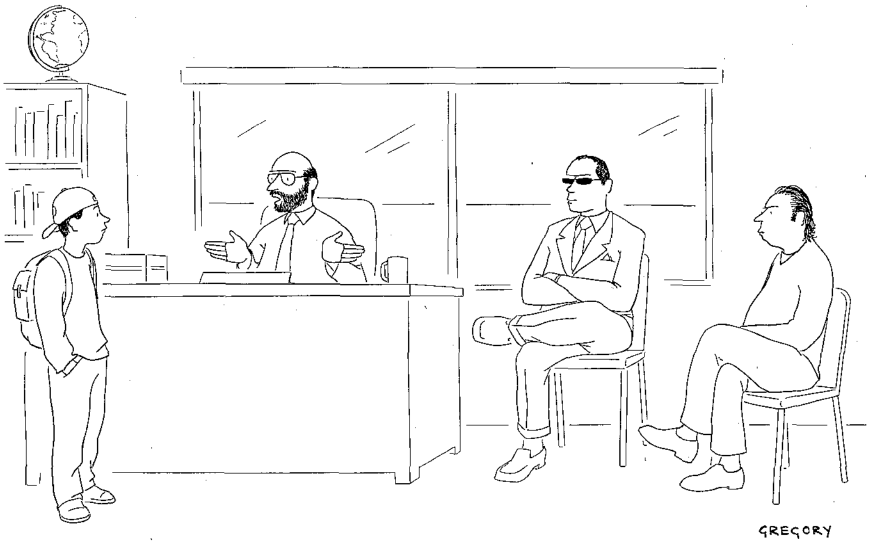
ETA's longest-lasting bonds have been with the I.R.A., and the ceasefire called in 1998 was an imitation of the Irish negotiations that had led to the accords signed at Stormont earlier that year. But the Basques did not enjoy the clout of a powerful international intermediary like President Clinton to broker their talks with Madrid. During the ceasefire, in fact, Prime Minister Aznar said that he did not want third parties involved, and went so far as to ask other countries to coöperate more fully with the Spanish police in apprehending ETA fugitives. In the past, ETA members have been granted sanctuary as political refugees in Algeria, Cuba, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and even France. There have been a rash of extraditions of ETA fugitives recently, although Castro continues to be friendly. At the Ibero-American Summit in Panama last year, he refused to sign a document condemning ETA.

In mid-January, two of the principal members of ETA's Barcelona command, which had killed four people since September, including Ernest Lluch, a former Spanish health minister, were stopped late one night by the police because their car had a crooked license plate and one of the doors was ajar. A Basque man in his late thirties was driving and a woman in her twenties was in the back seat, holding a large cooking pot (later found to be full of explosives). While the policemen were questioning the driver, they noticed that he had a gun, and they arrested him and his companion. The two are now in custody, and a great deal of evidence indicates that they were involved in the murder of the policeman in Barcelona in December, the day the Basque nationalist organizations met in Guernica. A third member of their cell, a young Catalan who is the son of a senior Barcelona police officer, was arrested a few weeks ago.

Ernest Lluch, ETA's most prominent victim, had been involved in efforts to promote negotiations between Spanish politicians and Basque nationalists. He was killed, ETA explained in a recent communiqué, because he had been trying to "play good cop" in a political game "aimed at insuring the Basque Country's dismemberment and continued domination by Spain." Lluch's murder was widely condemned, and there were many demonstrations against it.

Kepa Aulestia, a former member of ETA who spent two years in prison during the Franco years and has since become a writer for an anti-nationalist Basque newspaper, told me that he feels guilty about his generation's failure to control the younger ideologues who now make up ETA. "There was some justification when the violence was directed against Franco," he said. "But the violence now sometimes seems to take place for its own sake. And the most disquieting thing is the utter naturalness with which the young people utilize it, without even a trace of pity."

Kepa Aulestia grew up in a tiny rural village where a dialect of Euskera was spoken. He and his two brothers joined ETA in the seventies, and his eldest brother, who became something of a legend in the organization, trained a number of ETA volunteers who went on to make names for themselves. Rather ruefully, Aulestia mentioned that one of them was Arnaldo Otegi, who is now the head of Euskal Herritarok. "Otegi joined ETA when most of the rest of us left it," Aulestia said.



"Here's the deal, Josh—these two gentlemen want to turn that note you passed in homeroom into a movie."

ETA's base of support is estimated at around a hundred and eighty thousand people, close to ten per cent of the Basque population, as reflected in the number of votes received by Euskal Herritarok's candidates in municipal and provincial elections in Euzkadi. The headquarters of Euskal Herritarok are on the ground floor of a modern block of offices and apartments in San Sebastián, not far from the university where Fernando Savater used to teach ethics. When I went to visit, a couple of bicycles were leaning against the wall outside the glass front door. A young secretary buzzed me into a room laid out in a typical open-plan corporate manner, with orange-colored wall partitions separating desks in the middle and a line of glassed-in cubicles along the sides. There was a sitting area with couches and tables covered with issues of the party's magazine.

Arnaldo Otegi, a pleasant-looking man with short black hair, occupies one of the cubicles. He was wearing black jeans and a black T-shirt, and he had an emerald stud in his left earlobe. Otegi has a reputation for being media-savvy. During the ceasefire that was declared in the fall of 1998, he appeared before the press so often that he was referred to as "the Basque Gerry Adams." Before he became the party's spokesman, though, Otegi was one of ETA's "hard men," and he spent a number of years in prison for terrorist offenses.

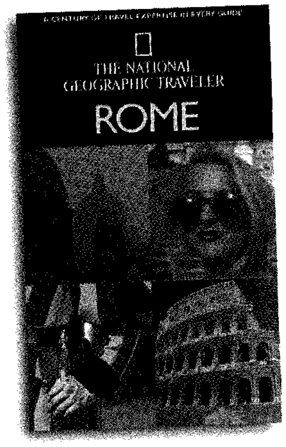
I asked Otegi what he and his colleagues in ETA were hoping to achieve. "We are proposing a question about political sovereignty," he replied. "The imposition of a foreign culture is what impels the conflict, and the armed struggle as well." As an example of what he meant, Otegi spoke of the need for a Basque educational system without Spanish interference. "We have only a forty-per-cent say over what our children learn in school; the Spanish state imposes the rest. We must create an educational system that conserves our cultural values." There must be a public referendum in which the status of the Basque homeland could be decided, Otegi said. But first it was necessary to decide who is a Basque and who isn't. "We say that anyone who lives in the Basque country and works here and wants to be a Basque, and who agrees to the principle of Basque self-determination, is a Basque." In the future, he said, the party hoped to issue Basque identity cards. "We're just different," he said. "What are we supposed to do? . . . Some people say that we are the last indigenous people of Europe. In that light, the need to rescue Basque culture from extinction can be compared with the need to save the Amazon forest."

On my last trip to Bilbao, I had a drink with Bernardo Atxaga, a Basque novelist. Atxaga is a rumpled, impish man of fifty with wild curly hair. He was worried about a close friend, Mikel Zuluaga, a writer and the owner of a travel bookstore in Bilbao. Zuluaga has been charged with belonging to ETA and has been imprisoned since November. Atxaga said that although his friend is a fervent believer in Basque independence, he is well known for his pacifism. Atxaga believes Zuluaga was arrested because he published a rather anarchistic personal manifesto last year that called for a campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience to bring about the creation of a Basque state. Atxaga describes Zuluaga's manifesto as an effort to come up with an alternative to "the politicization of Basque cultural identity."

"I don't mind living within Spain," Atxaga said. "It has a more appropriate scale for a country than Euzkadi does. But it's difficult to stomach so many attacks on our culture. We have a minority group of *integristas*, fundamentalists, on the inside, and then on the outside we have a state that wants to destroy everything the minority stands for. Most of us are stuck in the middle, and we no longer know which way to turn."

On January 19th, the Aznar government announced that it was giving a posthumous medal to Melitón Manzanas, the head of a political-intelligence police unit in San Sebastián during the Franco regime. Manzanas had collaborated with the Gestapo and had helped capture Jews fleeing across the border into Spain from Occupied France. He was also responsible for the torture of hundreds of Basques, and in 1968 ETA assassinated him. He was the group's first victim. Basque officials protested that the medal was an insulting gesture of approval for someone who had persecuted their people.

On January 26th, a cook who worked at the naval headquarters in San Sebastián was killed by a car bomb. ETA didn't officially claim responsibility for the killing (it usually waits weeks or months to do so), but it was almost certainly an ETA attack, the first successful one of the new year. ♦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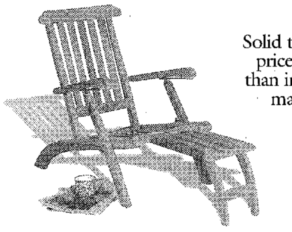

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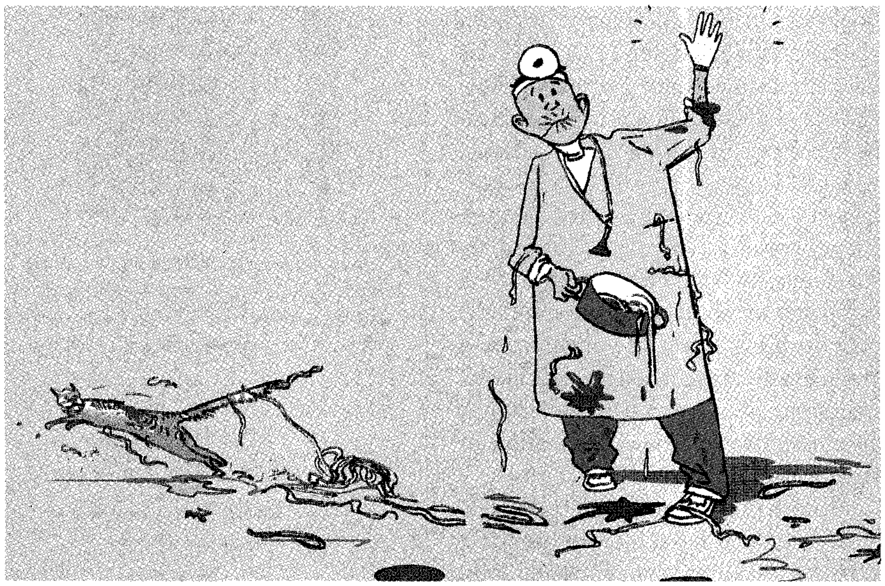
SHOUTS & MURMURS

FIRST, DO NO HARM

BY BEN GREENMAN



Federal health officials say they will soon allow Medicare beneficiaries to obtain information about doctors who may have made errors.—*Associated Press.*

DR. LUCAS MILKOWSKY: At a Ground Round restaurant in Chicago in 1980, thought he was tightening the top of a bottle of ketchup when in fact he was loosening it. Then shook the bottle, spattering ketchup all over the shirt of the man in back of him.

DR. JAMES ARTEST: Left the book he was reading on the subway.

DR. LORENA MARTINEZ: In 1978, advised her uncle Carlos to buy a Ford Pinto. When newspapers began to publish reports about the Pinto's design flaws, particularly the fact that when the car was hit from behind sometimes the gas tank exploded, she dismissed Carlos's worries and told him that his car was probably fine. Nothing ever happened with the car, but Carlos began to feel that Lorena didn't take him seriously, and over time he stopped calling her on holidays.

DR. PAULA STENGEL: Phoned her mother's house instead of her sister's, thinking that her daughter would be there, and temporarily threw her mother into a panic.

DR. DON RIFKIN: Drank too much at his own wedding.

DR. LOUIS LERRIÈRE: In 1986, played on a pickup basketball team. With ten seconds remaining and his team down by a point, received in-bounds pass from teammate. Spotted an open teammate under the basket, but hesitated, because the open man was a doctor who had questioned Dr. Lerrière's judgment at grand rounds. Attempted final shot himself. Was blocked.

DR. KEN OLIPHANT: Bought stock when it was fourteen dollars per share and sold it at 10⅜.

DR. NAN GERRITY: In college, dated a married professor.

DR. GEORGE MASTERS: Took his wife to a nice Italian restaurant and paid for dinner with his American Express gold card but forgot to sign the check.

DR. ELAINE JACKSON: Did not speak to her son for two full days after he was caught drinking in school, despite the fact that, in 1979, she had authored a paper titled "Silent Right, Silent Wrong: Why Punitive Noncommunication Is an Inappropriate Parenting Strategy."

DR. HAROLD WOLFE: After installing row covers in his greenhouse, allowed excessive heat buildup, which withered his crop of Heritage red raspberries.

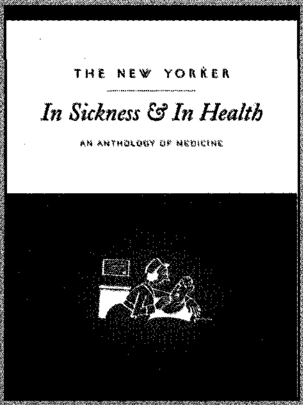
DR. STEVEN REBOULET: Met his brother's girlfriend during a weekend ski trip in 1977 and called her Jeannette, though her name was Julie.

DR. JENNIFER CAMERON: Put a metal-rimmed bowl into the microwave.

DR. BARBARA BARRY: Did not apply an underlayment before putting down tiles in her bathroom.

DR. AMOS HICKAM: Shortly after his divorce in 1986, went on a road trip from Chicago to Montreal with his new girlfriend. Tried but failed to restrain himself from discussing the dissolution of his marriage. Tried but failed to describe circumstances in a fashion that maturely shared blame between him and his ex-wife. Described ex-wife as a "real ball-buster," though he knew before he spoke that the phrase was a slack, misogynistic cliché. Made matters worse by starting a silly fight over girlfriend's inability to read a map correctly, charging that she had somehow got the whole car turned around so that they were heading away from Montreal rather than toward it. In fact, she was reading the map perfectly. Dr. Hickam had forgotten that since Canada uses the metric system there comes a time just after you cross the Canadian border when the numbers on highway signs refer to distances not in miles but in kilometres and, consequently, all destinations seem to be receding. Compounded his error further by putting his fingers in his ears and saying, "I'm not listening" when his girlfriend untangled the mathematical illusion. ♦

ISTVAN BANYAI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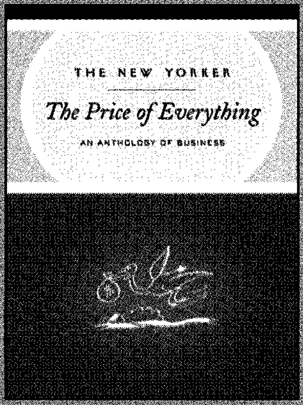
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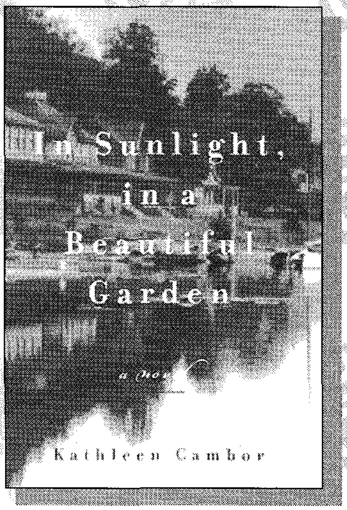

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CRIMSON TIDE

What is blushing? No one knows for sure, but it can ruin your life.

BY ATUL GAWANDE

In January of 1997, Christine Drury became the overnight anchorwoman for Channel 13 News, the local NBC affiliate in Indianapolis. In the realm of television news and talk shows, this is how you get your start. (David Letterman began his career by doing weekend weather at the same station.) Drury worked the 9 P.M. to 5 A.M. shift, developing stories and, after midnight, reading a thirty-second and a two-and-a-half-minute bulletin. If she was lucky and there was breaking news in the middle of the night, she could get more airtime, covering the news live, either from the newsroom or in the field. If she was very lucky—like the time a Conrail train derailed in Greencastle—she'd get to stay on for the morning show.

Drury was twenty-six years old when she got the job. From the time she was a girl growing up in Kokomo, Indiana, she had wanted to be on television, and especially to be an anchorwoman. She envied the confidence and poise of the women she saw behind the desk. One day during high school, on a shopping trip to an Indianapolis mall, she spotted Kim Hood, who was then Channel 13's prime-time anchor. "I wanted to be her," Drury says, and the encounter somehow made the goal seem attainable. In college, at Purdue University, she majored in telecommunications, and one summer she did an internship at Channel 13. A year and a half after graduating, she landed a bottom-rung job there as a production assistant. She ran the teleprompter, positioned cameras, and generally did whatever she was told. During the next two years, she worked her way up to writing news and then, finally, to the overnight anchor job. Her bosses saw her as an ideal prospect. She wrote fine news scripts, they told her, had a TV-ready voice, and, not incidentally, had "the look"—which is to say that she was pretty in a wholesome, all-American, Meg Ryan way. She had perfect white teeth, blue eyes, blond hair, and an easy smile.

During her broadcasts, however, she found that she could not stop blushing. The most inconsequential event was enough to set it off. She'd be on the set, reading the news, and then she'd stumble over a word or realize that she was talking too fast. Almost instantly, she'd redden. A sensation of electric heat would start in her chest and then surge upward into her neck, her ears, her scalp. In physiological terms, it was a mere redirection of blood flow. The face and neck have an unusual number of veins near the surface, and they can carry more blood than those of similar size elsewhere. Stimulated by certain neurological signals, they will dilate while other peripheral vessels contract: the hands will turn white and clammy even as the face flushes. For Drury, more troubling than the physical reaction was the distress that accompanied it: her mind would go blank; she'd hear herself stammer. She'd have an overwhelming urge to cover her face with her hands, to turn away from the camera, to hide.

For as long as Drury could remember, she had been a blusher, and, with her pale Irish skin, her blushes stood out. She was the sort of child who almost automatically reddened with embarrassment when called on in class or while searching for a seat in the school lunchroom. As an adult, she could be made to blush by a grocery-store cashier's holding up the line to get a price on her cornflakes, or by getting honked at while driving. It may seem odd that such a person would place herself in front of a camera. But Drury had always fought past her tendency toward embarrassment. In high school, she had been a cheerleader, played on the tennis team, and been selected for the prom-queen court. At Purdue, she had played intramural tennis, rowed crew with friends, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa.

She'd worked as a waitress and as an assistant manager at a Wal-Mart, even leading the staff every morning in the Wal-Mart Cheer. Her gregariousness and social grace have always assured her a large circle of friends.

On the air, though, she was not getting past the blushing. When you look at tapes of her early broadcasts—reporting on an increase in speeding-ticket fines, a hotel food poisoning, a twelve-year-old with an I.Q. of 325 who graduated from college—the redness is clearly visible. Later, she began wearing turtlenecks and applying to her face a thick layer of Merle Norman Cover Up Green concealer. Over this she would apply MAC Studiofix foundation. Her face ended up a bit dark, but the redness became virtually unnoticeable.

Still, a viewer could tell that something wasn't right. Now when she blushed—and eventually she would blush nearly every other broadcast—you could see her stiffen, her eyes fixate, her movements become mechanical. Her voice sped up and rose in pitch. "She was a real deer in the headlights," one producer said.

Drury gave up caffeine. She tried breath-control techniques. She bought self-help books for television performers and pretended the camera was her dog, her friend, her mom. For a while, she tried holding her head a certain way, very still, while on camera. Nothing worked.

Given the hours and the extremely limited exposure, being an overnight anchor is a job without great appeal. People generally do it for about a year, perfect their skills, and move on to a better position. But Drury was going nowhere. "She was definitely not ready to be on during daylight hours," a producer at the station said. In October of 1998, almost two years into her job, she wrote in her journal, "My feelings of slipping continue. I spent the entire day crying. I'm on my way to work and I feel like I may never use enough Kleenex. I can't figure out why God would bless me with a job I can't do. I have to figure out how to do it. I'll try everything before I give up."

What is this peculiar phenomenon called blushing? A skin reaction? An emotion? A kind of vascular expression? Scientists have never been sure how to describe it. The blush is at once physiology and psychology. On the one hand, blushing is involuntary, uncontrollable, and external, like a rash. On the other hand, it requires thought and feeling at the highest order of cerebral function. "Man is the only animal that blushes," Mark Twain wrote. "Or needs to."

Observers have often assumed that blushing is simply the outward manifestation of shame. Freudians, for example, viewed blushing this way, arguing that it is a displaced erection, resulting from repressed sexual desire. But, as Darwin noted and puzzled over in an 1872 essay, it is not shame but the prospect of exposure, of humiliation, that makes us blush. "A man may feel thoroughly ashamed at having told a small falsehood, without blushing," he wrote, "but if he even suspects that he is detected he will instantly blush, especially if detected by one whom he reveres."

But if it is humiliation that we are concerned about, why do we blush when we're praised? Or when people sing "Happy Birthday" to us? Or when people just look at us? Michael Lewis, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, routinely demonstrates the effect in classes. He announces that he will randomly point at a student, that the pointing is meaningless and reflects no judgment whatever about the person. Then he closes his eyes and points. Everyone looks to see who it is. And, invariably, that person is overcome by embarrassment. In an odd experiment conducted a couple of years ago, two social psychologists, Janice Templeton and Mark Leary, wired subjects with facial-temperature sensors and put them on one side of a one-way mirror. The mirror was then removed to reveal an entire audience staring at them from the other side. Half the time the audience members were wearing dark glasses, and half the time they were not. Strangely, subjects blushed only when they could see the audience's eyes.

She tried makeup, medication, and therapy, then a more drastic treatment.

PIERRE LE-TAN

What is perhaps most disturbing about blushing is that it produces secondary effects of its own. It is itself embarrassing, and can cause intense self-consciousness, confusion, and loss of focus. (Darwin, struggling to explain why this might be, conjectured that the

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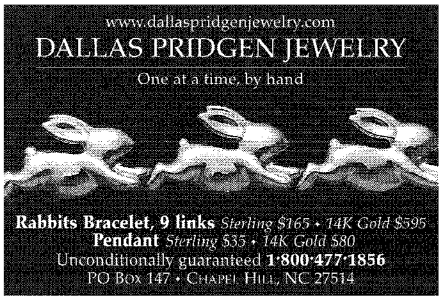

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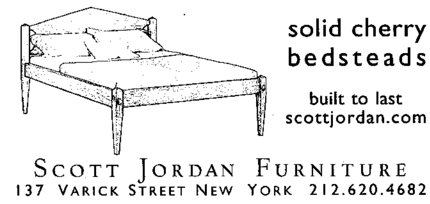

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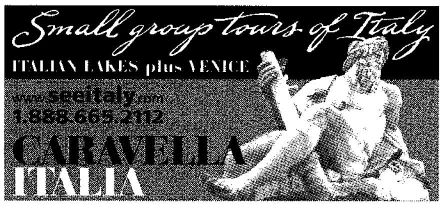

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greater blood flow to the face drained blood from the brain.)

Why we have such a reflex is perplexing. One theory is that the blush exists to show embarrassment, just as the smile exists to show happiness. This would explain why the reaction appears only in the visible regions of the body (the face, the neck, and the upper chest). But then why do dark-skinned people blush? Surveys find that nearly everyone blushes, regardless of skin color, despite the fact that in many people it is nearly invisible. And you don't need to turn red in order for people to recognize that you're embarrassed. Studies show that people detect embarrassment *before* you blush. Apparently, blushing takes between fifteen and twenty seconds to reach its peak, yet most people need less than five seconds to recognize that someone is embarrassed—they pick it up from the almost immediate shift in gaze, usually down and to the left, or from the sheepish, self-conscious grin that follows a half second to a second later. So there's reason to doubt that the purpose of blushing is entirely expressive.

There is, however, an alternative view held by a growing number of scientists. The effect of intensifying embarrassment may not be incidental; perhaps that is what blushing is for. The notion isn't as absurd as it sounds. People may hate being embarrassed and strive not to show it when they are, but embarrassment serves an important good. For, unlike sadness or anger or even love, it is fundamentally a moral emotion. Arising from sensitivity to what others think, embarrassment provides painful notice that one has crossed certain bounds while at the same time providing others with a kind of apology. It keeps us in good standing in the world. And if blushing serves to heighten such sensitivity this may be to one's ultimate advantage.

The puzzle, though, is how to shut it off. Embarrassment causes blushing, and blushing causes embarrassment—so what makes the cycle stop? No one knows, but in some people the mechanism clearly goes awry. A surprisingly large number of people experience frequent, severe, uncontrollable blushing. They describe it as "intense," "random," and "mortifying." One man I talked to would blush even when he was at home by himself just watching somebody get embarrassed on TV, and he lost his job as a management consultant because his bosses thought he didn't seem "comfortable" with clients. Another man, a neuroscientist, left a career in clinical medicine for a cloistered life in research almost entirely because of his tendency to blush. And even then he could not get away from it. His work on hereditary brain disease became so successful that he found himself fending off regular invitations to give talks and to appear on TV. He once hid in an office bathroom to avoid a CNN crew. On another occasion, he was invited to present his work to fifty of the world's top scientists, including five Nobel Prize winners. Usually, he could get through a talk by turning off the lights and showing slides. But this time a member of the audience stopped him with a question first, and the neuroscientist went crimson. He stood mumbling for a moment, then retreated behind the podium and surreptitiously activated his pager. He looked down at it and announced that an emergency had come up. He was very sorry, he said, but he had to go. He spent the rest of the day at home. This is someone who makes his living studying disorders of the brain and the nerves, yet he could not make sense of his own condition.

There is no official name for this syndrome, though it is often called "severe" or "pathological" blushing, and no one knows how many people have it. One very crude estimate suggests that from one to seven per cent of the general population is afflicted. Unlike most people, whose blushing diminishes after their teen-age years, chronic blushers report an increase as they age. At first, it was thought that the problem was the intensity of their blushing. But that proved not to be the case. In one study, for example, scientists used sensors to monitor the facial color and temperature of subjects, then made them stand before an

audience and do things like sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" or dance to a song. Chronic blushers became no redder than others, but they proved significantly more prone to blush. Christine Drury described the resulting vicious cycle to me: one fears blushing, blushes, and then blushes at being so embarrassed about blushing. Which came first—the blushing or the embarrassment—she did not know. She just wanted it to stop.

In the fall of 1998, Drury went to see an internist. "You'll grow out of it," he told her. When she pressed, however, he agreed to let her try medication. It couldn't have been obvious what to prescribe. Medical textbooks say nothing about pathological blushing. Some doctors prescribe anxiolytics, like Valium, on the assumption that the real problem is anxiety. Some prescribe beta-blockers, which blunt the body's stress response. Some prescribe Prozac or other antidepressants. The one therapy that has been shown to have modest success is not a drug but a behavioral technique known as paradoxical intention—having patients actively try to blush instead of trying not to. Drury used beta-blockers first, then antidepressants, and finally psychotherapy. There was no improvement.

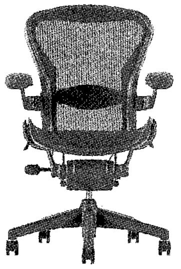
By December of 1998, her blushing had become intolerable, her on-air performance humiliating, and her career almost unsalvageable. She wrote in her diary that she was ready to resign. Then one day she searched the Internet for information about facial blushing, and read about a hospital in Sweden where doctors were performing a surgical procedure that could stop it. The operation involved severing certain nerves in the chest where they exit the spinal cord to travel up to the head. "I'm reading this page about people who have the exact same problem I had, and I couldn't believe it," she told me. "Tears were streaming down my face." The next day, she told her father that she had decided to have the surgery. Mr. Drury seldom questioned his daughter's choices, but this sounded to him like a bad idea. "It shocked me, really," he recalls. "And when she told her mother it shocked her even worse. There was basically no way her daughter was going to Sweden and having this operation."

Drury agreed to take some time to learn more about the surgery. She read the few articles she could find in medical journals. She spoke to the surgeons and to former patients. After a couple of weeks, she grew only more convinced. She told her parents that she was going to Sweden, and when it became clear that she would not be deterred her father decided to go with her.

The surgery is known as endoscopic thoracic sympathectomy, or E.T.S. It involves severing fibres of a person's sympathetic nervous system, part of the involuntary, or "autonomic," nervous system, which controls breathing, heart rate, digestion, sweating, and, among the many other basic functions of life, blushing. Toward the back of your chest, running along either side of the spine like two smooth white strings, are the sympathetic trunks, the access roads that sympathetic nerves travel along before exiting to individual organs. At the beginning of the twentieth century, surgeons tried removing branches of these trunks—a thoracic sympathectomy—for all sorts of conditions: epilepsy, glaucoma, certain cases of blindness. Mostly, the experiments did more harm than good. But surgeons did find two unusual instances in which a sympathectomy helped: it stopped intractable chest pain in patients with advanced, inoperable heart disease, and it put an end to hand and facial sweating in patients with hyperhidrosis—uncontrollable sweating.

Because the operation involved open-chest surgery, it was rarely performed. In recent years, however, a few surgeons, particularly in Europe, have been doing the procedure endoscopically, using scopes inserted through small incisions. Among them was a trio in Göteborg, Sweden, who noticed that many of their hyperhidrosis patients not only stopped sweating after surgery but stopped blushing, too. In 1992, the Göteborg group accepted a handful of patients who complained of disabling blushing. When the results were reported in the press, the doctors found themselves deluged with requests. Since 1998, the surgeons have done the operation for more than three thousand patients with severe blushing.

The operation is now performed around the world, but the Göteborg sur-



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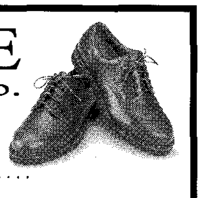

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geons are among the few to have published their results: ninety-four per cent of patients experienced a substantial reduction in blushing; in most cases it was eliminated completely. In surveys taken some eight months after the surgery, two per cent regretted the decision, because of side effects, and fifteen per cent were dissatisfied. The side effects are not life-threatening, but they are not trivial. The most serious complication, occurring in one per cent of patients, is Horner's syndrome, in which inadvertent injury of the sympathetic nerves to the eye results in a constricted pupil, a drooping eyelid, and a sunken eyeball. Less seriously, patients no longer sweat from the nipples upward, and most experience a substantial increase in lower-body sweating in compensation. (A decade after undergoing E.T.S. for hand sweating, according to one study, the proportion of patients who were satisfied with the outcome dropped from an initial ninety-six per cent to sixty-seven per cent, mainly because of compensatory sweating.) About a third of patients also notice a curious reaction known as gustatory sweating—sweating prompted by certain tastes or smells. And, because sympathetic branches to the heart are removed, patients experience about a ten-per-cent reduction in heart rate; some complain of impaired physical performance. For all these reasons, the operation is at best a last resort, something to be tried, according to the surgeons, only after nonsurgical methods have failed. By the time people call Göteborg, they are often desperate. As one patient who had the operation told me, "I would have gone through with it even if they told me there was a fifty-per-cent chance of death."

WINTER THIRST

I grew up with bituminous in my mouth
and sulfur smelling like rotten eggs and I
first started to cough because my lungs were like cardboard;
and what we called snow was gray with black flecks
that were like glue when it came to snowballs and made
them hard and crusty, though we still ate the snow
anyhow, and as for filth, well, start with
smoke, I carried it with me I know everywhere
and someone sitting beside me in New York or Paris
would know where I came from, we would go in for dinner—
red meat loaf or brown *choucroute*—and he would
guess my hill, and we would talk about soot
and what a dirty neck was like and how
the white collar made a fine line;
and I told him how we pulled heavy wagons
and loaded boxcars every day from 1
to 5 A.M. and how good it was walking
empty-handed to the No. 69 streetcar
and how I dreamed of my bath and how the water
was black and soapy then and what the void
was like and how a candle instructed me.

—*Gerald Stern*

On January 14, 1999, Christine Drury and her father arrived in Göteborg, a four-hundred-year-old seaport on Sweden's southwest coast. She remembers the day as beautiful, cold, and snowy. The Carlanderska Medical Center was old and small, with ivy-covered walls and big, arched wooden double doors. Inside, it was dim and silent; Drury was reminded of a dungeon. Only now did she become apprehensive, wondering what she was doing here, nine thousand miles away from home, at a hospital that she knew almost nothing about. Still, she checked in, and a nurse drew her blood for routine lab tests, made sure her medical records were in order, and took her payment, which came to six thousand dollars. Drury put it on a credit card.

The hospital room was reassuringly clean and modern, with white linens and blue blankets. Christer Drott, her surgeon, came to see her early the next morning. He spoke with impeccable British-accented English and was, she said, exceedingly comforting: "He holds your hand and is so compassionate. Those doctors have seen thousands of these cases. I just loved him."

At nine-thirty that morning, an orderly came to get her for the operation. "We had just done a story about a kid who died because the anesthesiologist had fallen asleep," Drury says. "So I made sure to ask the anesthesiologist not to fall asleep and let me die. He kind of laughed and said, 'O.K.' "

While Drury was unconscious, Drott, in scrubs and sterile gown, swabbed her chest and axillae (underarms) with antiseptic and laid down sterile drapes so that only her axillae were exposed. After feeling for a space between the ribs in her left axilla, he made a seven-millimetre puncture with the tip of his scalpel, then pushed a large-bore needle through the hole and into her chest. Two litres of carbon dioxide were pumped in through the needle, pushing her left lung downward and out of the way. Then Drott inserted a resectoscope, a long metal tube fitted with an eyepiece, fibre-optic illumination, and a cauterizing tip. It is actually a urological instrument, thin enough to pass through the urethra (though never thin enough, of course, for urology patients). Looking through the lens, he searched for her left sympathetic trunk, taking care to avoid injuring the main blood vessels from her heart, and found the glabrous cordlike structure lying along the heads of her ribs, where they join the spine. He cauterized the trunk at two points, over the second and third ribs, destroying all the facial branches except those that lead to the eye. Then, after making sure there was no bleeding, he pulled the instrument out, inserted a catheter to suction out the carbon dioxide and let her lung reëxpand, and sutured the quarter-inch incision. Moving to the other side of the table, he performed the same procedure on the right side of her chest. Everything went without a hitch. The operation took just twenty minutes.

What happens when you take away a person's ability to blush? Is it merely a surgical version of Merle Norman Cover Up Green—removing the redness but not the self-consciousness? Or can a few snips of peripheral nerve fibres actually affect the individual herself? I remember once, as a teen-ager, buying mirrored sunglasses. I lost them within a few weeks, but when I had them on I found myself staring at people brazenly, acting a little tougher. I felt disguised behind those glasses, less exposed, somehow freer. Would the surgery be something like this?

Almost two years after Drury's operation, I had lunch with her at a sports bar in Indianapolis. I had been wondering what her face would look like without the nerves that are meant to control its coloring—would she look ashen, blotchy, unnatural in some way? In fact, her face is clear and slightly pinkish, no different, she said, from before. Yet, since the surgery, she has not blushed. Occasionally, almost randomly, she has experienced a phantom blush: a distinct feeling that she is blushing even though she is not. I asked if her face reddens when she runs, and she said no, although it will if she stands on her head. The other physical changes seemed minor to her. The most noticeable thing, she said, was that neither her face nor her arms sweat now and her stomach, back, and legs sweat much more than they used to, though not enough to bother her. The scars, tiny to begin with, have completely disappeared.

From the first morning after the operation, Drury says, she felt transformed. An attractive male nurse came to take her blood pressure. Ordinarily, she would have blushed the instant he approached. But nothing of the sort happened. She felt, she says, as if a mask had been removed.

That day, after being discharged, she put herself to the test, asking random people on the street for directions, a situation that had invariably caused her to redden. Now, as her father confirmed, she didn't. What's more, the encounters felt easy and ordinary, without a glimmer of her old self-consciousness. At the airport, she recalls, she and her father were waiting in a long check-in line and she couldn't find her passport. "So I just dumped my purse out onto the floor and started looking for it, and it occurred to me that I was doing this—and I wasn't mortified," she says. "I looked up at my dad and just started crying."

Back home, the world seemed new. Attention now felt uncomplicated, unfrightening. Her usual internal monologue when talking to people ("Please don't blush, please don't blush, oh God I'm going to blush") vanished, and she found that she could listen to others better. She could look at them longer, too, without the urge to avert her gaze. In fact, she had to teach herself not to stare.

Five days after the surgery, Drury was back at the anchor desk. She put on almost no makeup that night. She wore a navy-blue woollen blazer, the kind of warm clothing she would never have worn before. "My attitude was, This is my début," she told me. "And it went perfectly."

Later, I viewed some tapes of her broadcasts from the first weeks after the surgery. I saw her report on the killing of a local pastor by a drunk driver, and on the shooting of a nineteen-year-old by a sixteen-year-old; she was, in fact, more natural than she'd ever been. One broadcast in particular struck me. It was not her regular nighttime bulletin but a public-service segment called "Read, Indiana, Read!" For six minutes of live airtime on a February morning, she was shown reading a story to a crowd of obstreperous eight-year-olds as messages encouraging parents to read to their children scrolled by. Despite the chaos of kids walking by, throwing things, putting their faces up to the camera, she persevered, remaining composed the entire time.

Drury had told no one about the operation, but people at work immediately noticed a difference in her. I spoke to a producer at her station who said, "She just told me she was going on a trip with her dad, but when she came back and I saw her on TV again, I said, 'Christine! That was unbelievable!' She looked amazingly comfortable in front of the camera. You could

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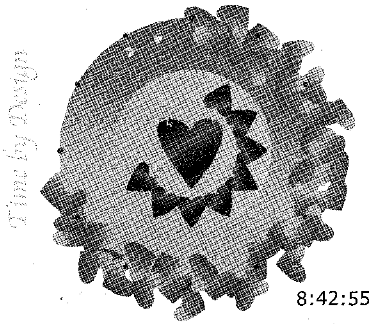

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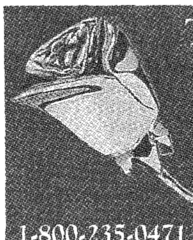

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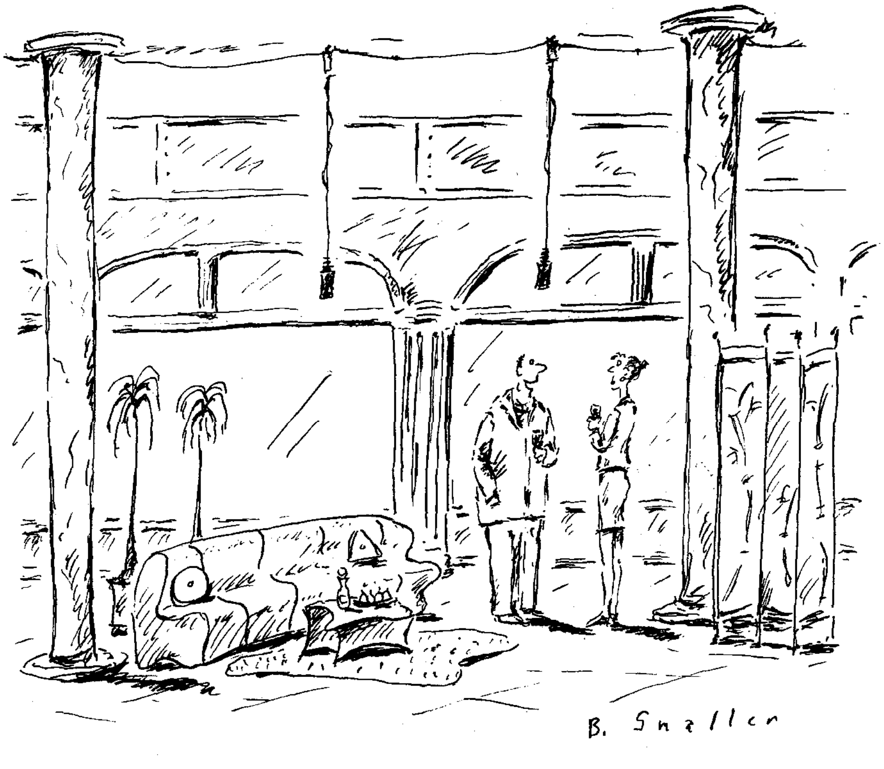
see the confidence coming through the TV, which was completely different from before." Within months, Drury got a job as a prime-time on-air reporter at another station.

A few snips of fibres to her face and she was changed. It's an odd notion, because we think of our essential self as being distinct from such corporeal details. Who hasn't seen a photo of himself, or heard his voice on tape, and thought, That isn't me? Burn patients who see themselves in a mirror for the first time—to take an extreme example—typically feel alien from their appearance. And yet they do not merely "get used" to it; their new skin changes them. It alters how they relate to people, what they expect of others, how they see themselves in others' eyes. A burn-ward nurse once told me that the secure may become fearful and bitter, the weak jut-jawed "survivors." Similarly, Drury had experienced her trip-wire blushing as something entirely external, not unlike a burn—"the red mask," she called it. Yet it reached so deep inside her that she believed it prevented her from being the person she was meant to be. Once the mask was removed, she seemed new, bold, "completely different from before." But what of the person who all her life had blushed and feared blushing and had been made embarrassed and self-conscious at the slightest scrutiny? That person, Drury gradually discovered, was still there.

One night, she went out to dinner with a friend and decided to tell him about the operation. He was the first person outside her family whom she had told, and he was horrified. She'd had an operation to *eliminate her ability to blush*? It seemed warped, he said, and, worse, vain. "You TV people will do anything to improve your career prospects," she recalls him saying.

She went home in tears, angry but also mortified, wondering whether it *was* a freakish and weak thing to have done. In later weeks and months, she became more and more convinced that her surgical solution made her a sort of impostor. "The operation had cleared my path to be the journalist I was trained to be," she says, "but I felt incredibly ashamed over needing to remove my difficulties by such artificial means."

She became increasingly fearful that others would find out about the operation. Once, a co-worker, trying to figure out what exactly seemed different about her, asked her if she had lost weight.



"It was an artist's loft. Now it's a lawyer's loft."

Smiling weakly, she told him no, and said nothing more. "I remember going to a station picnic the Saturday before the Indy 500, and thinking to myself the whole time, Please, please let me get out of here without anyone saying, 'Hey, what happened to your blushing?' " It was, she found, precisely the same embarrassment as before, only now it stemmed not from blushing but from its absence.

On television, self-consciousness began to distract her again. In June of 1999, she took up her new job, but she was not scheduled to go on the air for two months. During the hiatus, she grew uncertain about going back on TV. One day that summer, she went out with a crew that was covering storm damage in a neighboring town where trees had been uprooted. They let her practice her standup before the camera. She is sure she looked fine, but that wasn't how she felt. "I felt like I didn't belong there, didn't deserve to be there," she says. A few days later, she resigned.

More than a year has passed since then, and Drury has had to spend this time getting her life back on track. Unemployed and ashamed, she withdrew, saw no one, and spent her days watching TV from her couch, in a state of growing depression. Matters changed for her only gradually. She began, against all her instincts, admitting to friends and then former co-workers what had happened. To her surprise and relief, nearly everyone was supportive. In September, 1999, she even started an organization, the Red Mask Foundation, to spread information about chronic blushing and to provide a community for its sufferers. Revealing her secret seemed to allow her finally to move on.

That winter, she found a new job—in radio, this time, which made perfect sense. She became the assistant bureau chief for Metro Networks radio in Indianapolis. She could be heard anchoring the news every weekday morning on two radio stations, and then doing the afternoon traffic report for these and several other stations. Last spring, having regained her confidence, she began contacting television stations. The local Fox station agreed to let her be a substitute broadcaster. In early July, she was called in at the last minute to cover traffic on its three-hour morning show.

It was one of those breakfast "news" programs with two chirpy co-anchors—a man and a woman—in overstuffed chairs, cradling giant coffee mugs. Every half hour or so, they'd turn to Drury for a two-minute traffic report. She'd stand before a series of projected city maps, clicking through them and describing the various car accidents and construction roadblocks to look out for. Now and then, the co-anchors would strike up some hey-you're-not-our-usual-traffic-gal banter, which she managed comfortably, laughing and joking. It was exciting, she says, but not easy. She could not help feeling a little self-conscious, wondering what people might think about her coming back after her long absence. But the feelings did not overwhelm her. She is, she says, beginning to feel comfortable in her own skin.

One wants to know whether, in the end, her troubles were physical or psychological. But it is a question as impossible to answer as whether a blush is physical or mental—or, for that matter, whether a person is. Everyone is both, inseparable even by a surgeon's blade. I have asked Drury if she has any regrets about the operation. "Not at all," she says. She even calls the surgery "my cure." At the same time, she adds, "People need to know—surgery isn't the end of it." She has now reached what she describes as a happy medium. She is free from much of the intense self-consciousness that her blushing provoked, but she accepts the fact that she will never be entirely rid of it. In October, she became a freelance part-time on-air reporter for Channel 6, the ABC affiliate in Indianapolis. She hopes the job will become full time. "You know, I don't have a face for radio," she says. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER
From the Washington Post.

Fair Oaks District, Centreville Rd., 2300 block, Dec. 7. Animal control was called about a squirrel running inside a residence. When an animal control officer saw the squirrel, it jumped into an open baby grand piano. After the officer started playing the song "All I Want" by the group Toad the Wet Sprocket, the squirrel jumped out of the piano and onto curtains, damaging them. The squirrel then jumped onto the officer's head and pounced onto a couch, where the officer was able to catch it. The officer released the animal outside. Neither the squirrel nor the officer was injured.

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE EMPEROR OF ICE

How a bag of supermarket ice cubes launched a plan to dominate an industry.

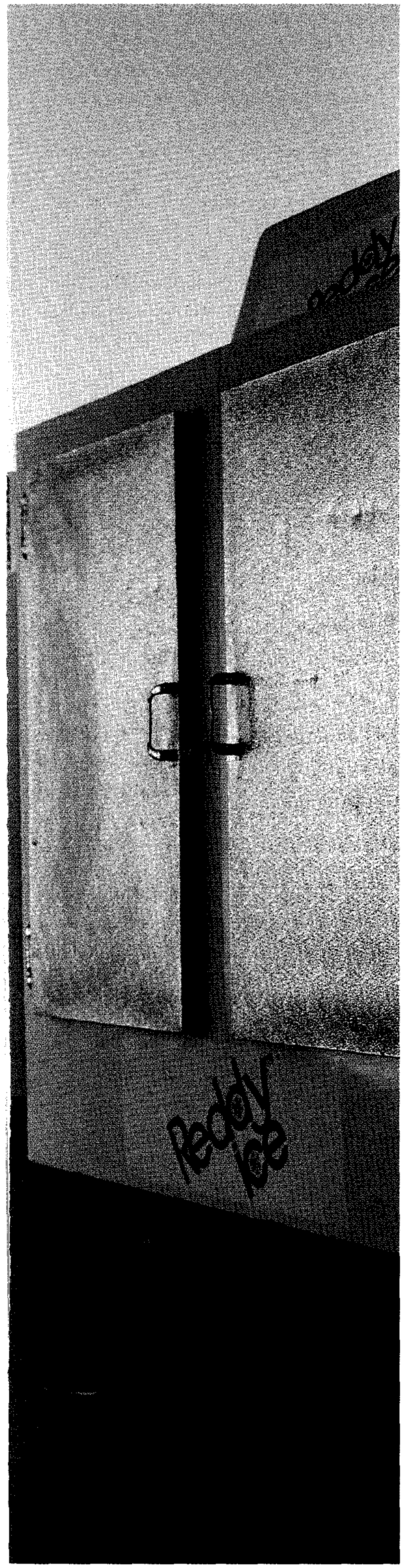
BY IAN PARKER

On July 22, 1998, the temperature in Seattle hit ninety, fifteen degrees above the usual high. A few days later, it was ninety-five, then ninety-seven. Bill Just, the owner of a local ice-cube distribution company, was as pleased as you could imagine. "This was what I'd been waiting for," he told me recently. "I was thinking, Oh, yes!" Just, who used to play drums in a Las Vegas lounge act called the Current, moved to Seattle with his family twenty-two years ago so that his children could grow up in a more wholesome environment. He took a job delivering packaged ice, and eventually formed a company called All Seasons Ice—a name that carries more than a hint of wishful thinking. The American ice-cube trade is sharply seasonal, and Seattle's season is short and rather halfhearted. Washington State has nothing like the ice market enjoyed by Southern California, Texas, and Florida—"the ice belt," as Just calls it. In those places, he said, "You might have to deliver to the supermarket three or four times a day in the summer—now, that's selling some damned ice." For a few glorious days in 1998, as the people of Seattle filled their picnic coolers, Bill Just experienced ice-belt demand.

But the heat wave continued into a second week, demand outstripped supply, and Just became anxious. "We're not geared up for that kind of weather," he said. "We didn't have enough ice stored up." Just's anxiety turned into a kind of panic. "It became a nightmare," he said. "We were bringing ice from all over the place—California, Portland, everyplace we could buy it. We spent half a million dollars to try to keep up with this mess." Still, customers were going short. Most alarming, Just found that he could not satisfy Safeway, with whom he had an exclusive contract to supply more than a hundred stores in the region. "This was twenty-five per cent of my income," he said. "And they're the kind of company that says, 'If you can't take care of us, then screw you.' I'm like, 'Hey, this is a once-in-a-lifetime thing. This will never happen again as long as we live.' "

Just struggled on to the end of the crisis. The weather cooled; demand fell. Then, one day in the fall, Just made a routine phone call to the frozen-food manager at a Safeway in Bothell, a few miles down the road from the All Seasons office, and asked about the store's ice needs for that week. The reply was devastating. The manager told him not to deliver; he did not need All Seasons ice that week, and he might never need it again. He said that, from now on, Safeway would be selling its own ice, made in the store. Just drove to Bothell. Ten minutes later, he was standing in front of a machine that he had never seen before, but whose reputation he knew very well. Just says that he resisted the urge to kick it. "Oh, it was ugly, very ugly," he remembers, half laughing. "It was the monster from the deep, coming to bite you."

The Ice Factory is a humming white cabinet with glass doors, on top of which, at head height, stands an icemaker, programmed to send a new bag thumping down when the cabinet is less than two-thirds full. The machine automatically makes the ice, weighs it, bags it and seals it, and drops the bag right there at the front of the store, cutting out the nuisance of fork-lift trucks and wet floors and phone calls to retired Vegas drummers. For the past four years, the Ice Factory has been used by its inventor



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

James Stuart, who now makes more than a billion ice cubes a day, in Houston. "People ask me, 'What do you do?' I say, 'I do ice, I just do ice.' "

to force an entry into American ice, and, while national attention has been turned to other places in the economy—toward fleeting, digital products that never need to be hit hard with a sledgehammer—there has been a revolution in the simplest solid thing you can buy in a supermarket. The Ice Factory has brought sudden confusion into what has long been an industry of small-scale, family-run firms, with such appealing names as Frosty Ice, Mr. Ice, and I.C.E. Ice.

On that morning in Bothell, Just turned to the Safeway frozen-food manager and said, "Well, I hope these things don't work as well as they say they do. I hope this isn't what it's made out to be." Then he took a photograph of the machine and drove back to his office.

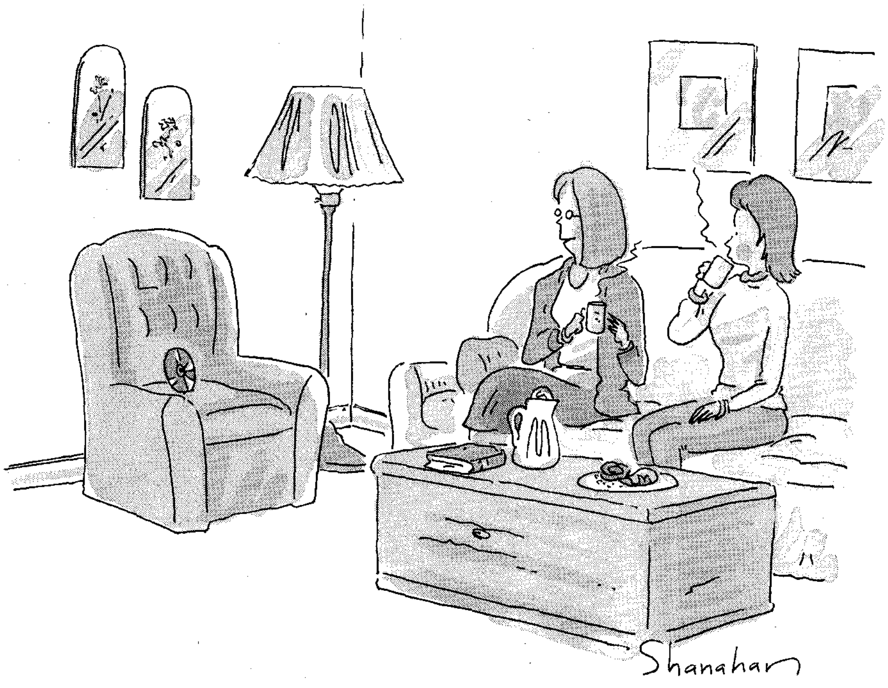
"The words 'pompous ass' mean anything to you?" a prominent ice manufacturer asked me when I mentioned the name of the Ice Factory's inventor, James Stuart. The manufacturer continued, "The ice industry is not a big industry, and everybody knows everybody else, and he comes in and basically says, 'You're a bunch of idiots. I'm going to show you how to make money. I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that.' Right away, you think, Who *is* this jerk?"

Jim Stuart is the chairman and C.E.O. of Packaged Ice, a Houston-based firm that is the only publicly traded ice company in the United States. A former accountant in his late fifties, he is a friendly, slightly overweight man, who wears pastel polo shirts and likes to keep ice on hand for sucking and chewing. He lives in the western suburbs of Houston, where he sleeps only four hours a night, and gets up in the morning to the Weather Channel, checking for heat waves. When we met recently, he said, "People ask me, 'What do you do? Golf? Tennis?' I say, 'I do ice. I just do ice.'" We were driving from Houston to Austin late at night. There was a cooler in the back of the car, full of sodas on ice—"the best ice, crystal-clear ice," Stuart said—and the sound of shifting Cokes provided additional percussion to a three-track Sarah Brightman CD on the stereo, which was playing very softly in a perpetual loop, hour after hour. When Stuart is fully upbeat, his manner has an acquired air reminiscent of the motivational posters he buys in bulk for the walls of his ice plants. ("Integrity is one of several paths. . ."; "Individuals say 'I.' Teams say 'we.'") Stuart's ice evangelism includes a trace of self-mockery, suggesting that he understands how ice might appear undeserving of all this bullish single-mindedness. And, in truth, there are other things on his mind: we talked about his wife and son and granddaughter, and he showed me a photograph of himself, dressed as Elvis Presley, at a recent company retreat. He has a collection of a hundred guns, and, perhaps more alarming, he has seen Agatha Christie's long-running London whodunit, "The Mousetrap," three times. But Stuart would like it to be known that schemes of national domination are not put into action ironically. "All I think about all day long is packaged ice," he said. Now and then, we passed through a small, dark town—a flash of Wendy's and Texaco—and Stuart would say flatly, "We have all the ice here. Anywhere you buy ice, it's ours."

Stuart sells ice in bags. It is the kind of ice that—according to one devoted ice professional in Texas—should turn itself from a jagged eight-pound rock into a thousand dancing cubes with one clean drop of the bag onto a hard surface. In common with the officers and two hundred and forty corporate members of the International Packaged Ice Association (I.P.I.A.), Stuart is hostile toward the most common alternative—homemade ice. I.P.I.A. members regard the use of freezer trays as a strange and dirty habit, akin to licking a handrail in a subway car. Homemade cubes are unacceptably white, and they carry mysterious flavors. "They taste of air," one professional iceman said to me. Another, Paul Hendler, who runs an ice company in Mamaroneck, New York, said, "My wife threatens me with the trays. She calls me up, saying, 'You're bringing home a bag of ice tonight or the trays are going in the freezer.' She really knows how to hurt a guy."

The other competition to the packaged product is loose, "commercial" ice, which falls out of small icemaking machines in bars and motels and McDonald's restaurants. (If the Ice Factory did not bag its own ice, this is all it would be.) Commercial ice is made vertically. Water runs down refrigerated plates or tubes, and the specks of solid matter that cause whiteness in homemade cubes are expected to fall to the bottom and drain away. The I.P.I.A. makes no great complaints about commercial ice, but it notes that, when a store informally bags this ice by hand, there are clear risks to public health. "There've been rodent parts," the I.P.I.A.'s executive director, Jane McEwen, told me. "Absolutely."

The I.P.I.A. represents the two-and-a-half-billion-dollar trade in indus-

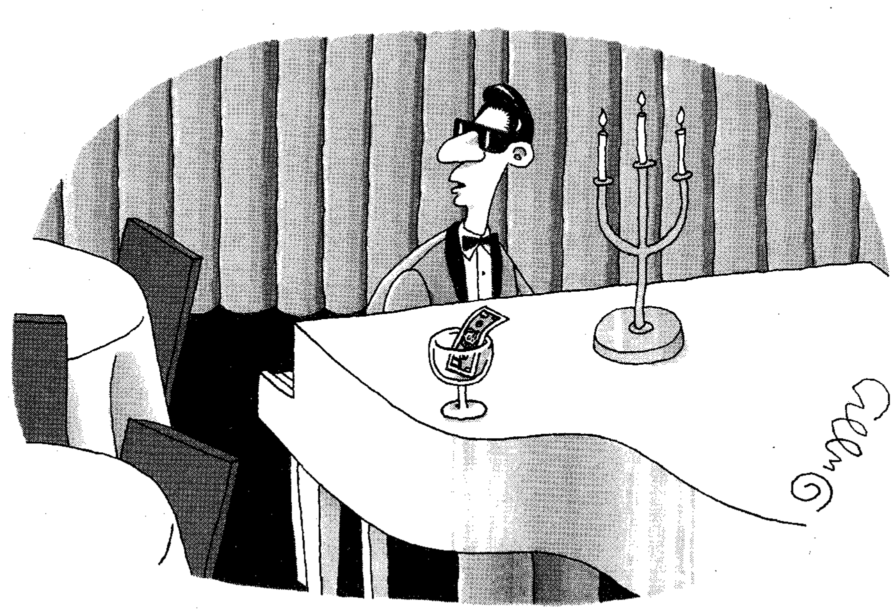


"I should have had him put into a more manageable format years ago."

trial ice—ice sold in bags and made in factories that emit a vague smell of ammonia and ozone on the edges of American cities. Using purified water and giant versions of the commercial machines, these plants can produce more than five hundred tons of ice cubes a day—either of irregular, fragmented chunks or of "tube" ice cubes (which the distracted drinker can thread onto a cocktail stick or try to wear as a ring). These factories are scattered across the country in an arrangement dictated by the nature of the product: ice is heavy, perishable, and very cheap. This severely inhibits employee theft (not a big industry issue), and, traditionally, it has meant that an ice manufacturer must be reasonably close to his retailers—gas stations and convenience stores and supermarkets. In the packaged-ice industry, the generally accepted maximum delivery distance is a hundred miles. Even allowing for the upheavals of recent years, there are still twenty-five hundred packaged-ice manufacturers in the United States, and a thousand of them are fully committed to the task, producing at least five tons of ice a day for the wholesale market. (The rest are at the back of liquor stores, freezing mice.)

Much of the ice industry feels resolutely old-fashioned. Many ice firms have "coal" or "fuel" in their names. Many have been under the same ownership for three generations. The industry's favorite marketing ploy, still, is to paint the word "ICE" in snowcapped blue-and-white letters on the side of a big white box. This is business laid bare: in an age of remorseless branding and promotion, selling ice has to do with price and service, and not much else. There is little call for advertising or focus groups or product relaunches. "You can make the hamburger with prettier lettuce and bigger tomatoes," Jim Read, the owner of Read Ice, in Kountze, Texas, told me. "But ice—it's just a clear product frozen in the bag. And that's all it's going to be. We can't make it red, we can't make it blue, we can't make it psychedelic. That's it."

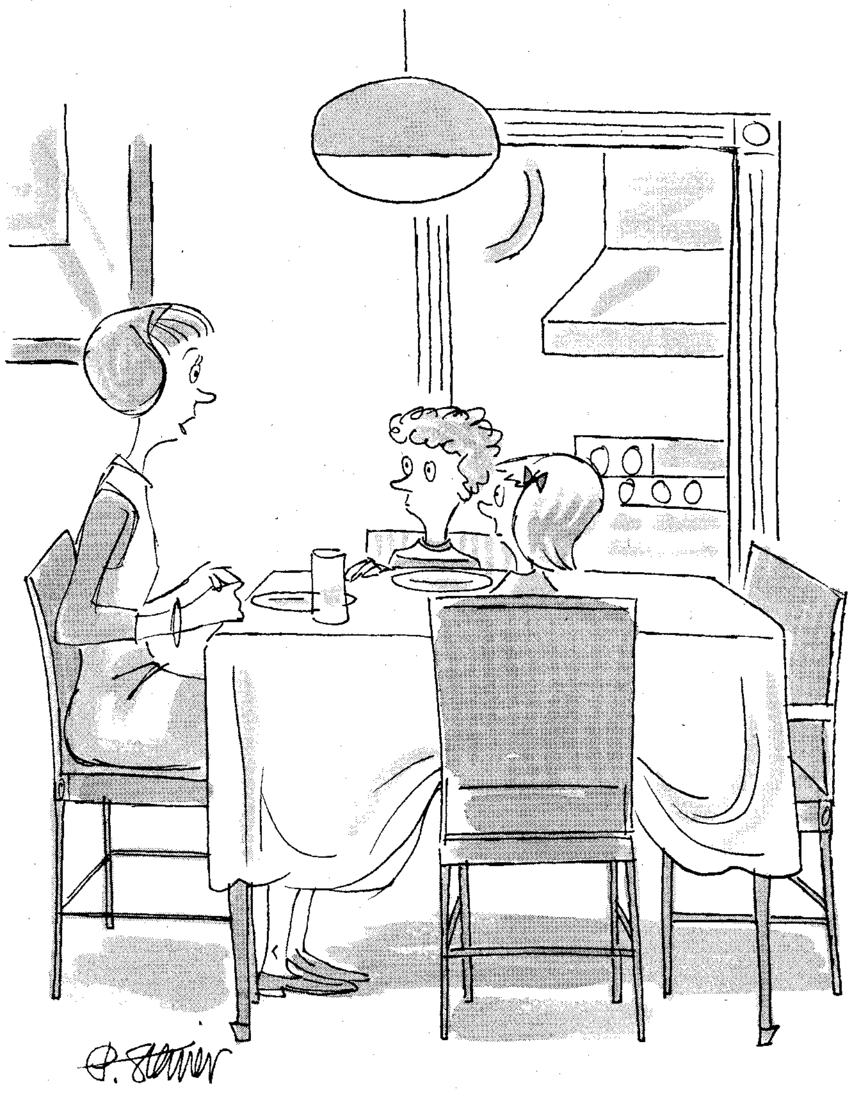
But the industry may, in fact, have some room to maneuver—and bottled water points the way. Ice cubes sell for between ten and twenty cents a pound. Bottled water sells for at least fifty cents a pound. The more optimistic ice manufacturers see their product on a slow but eventually glorious journey from commodity to quality foodstuff. And in an effort to make packaged ice an everyday purchase, rather than something bought three or four times a year (which is the current American average), the I.P.I.A. is playing the purity card, running advertisements in *Convenience Store News* which show bottled water being poured into a bag of packaged ice, with the tag line "The Difference Is Temperature!" And the organization is encouraging innovations: handles on bags of ice; smaller, daintier bags (such as are used in Japan); and bolder ice-bag graphics. A Chicago company, Lang Ice, has been promoting a "classic" cube—that is, a cube in the shape of a cube. And an Anglo-Australian partnership recently marketed unfrozen Scottish spring water in sealed ice trays for home freezing—a potential cube, the emperor's new cube.



"I've had a request. Nonetheless, here's another song."

If this kind of niche marketing succeeds in giving some brands of ice a swanky, gourmet association, it will link the modern ice industry to its nineteenth-century roots, when Wenham ice, for example—from Wenham Lake, in Massachusetts—was valued above all others in London for its supposedly luxurious purity. The trade in commercially harvested ice was pioneered by Frederic Tudor, America's first ice king. In the early nineteenth century, Tudor began cutting ice from Walden Pond, among other places, and shipping it in blocks, insulated in sawdust, to Southern states, as well as to Australia, India, and South America. (Tom Shachtman tells the story in his 1999 book "Absolute Zero and the Conquest of Cold.") It was a daring enterprise: to carry ice to a hot place, to race against time, to risk the extinction of your cargo, to amaze your tropical customers who at first could not tell if the thing was hot or cold or wet or dry—that narrative has a dreamy, fictional air. (It finds a place in Gabriel García Márquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude" and in Paul Theroux's "The Mosquito Coast.") And it turned Frederic Tudor into a multimillionaire. "Drink, Spaniards, and be cool, that I, who have suffered so much in the cause, may be able to go home and keep myself warm," he wrote in his diary after making a delivery to Cuba.

In the mid-nineteenth century, as iceboxes became increasingly common in American homes, there were efforts—especially in the South—to find cheaper and more reliable sources of ice. Water had been artificially frozen as early as 1755; and, in the eighteen-thirties, scientists in London and Florida discovered a way to make ice, first by vaporizing a volatile liquid, then compressing



"Remember your father's inner child? Well, he's grown into an inner teen-ager."

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and condensing the vapor, and keeping the cycle going. (This is how a refrigerator works.) The first ammonia compressor was patented in 1872, and, in the last years of the century, these machines destroyed the industry that Tudor and his competitors had developed. In 1860, there were four artificial-ice plants in the United States; in 1889, there were about two hundred; by 1909, there were two thousand. Ice now came from factories, not ponds, and it was turned out in three-hundred-pound blocks by lowering steel cans of pure water into tanks of refrigerated salted water. Kept below thirty-two degrees, the salted water did not freeze, but the water in the cans did. Those cans were then lifted from the tank, and the ice was coaxed out of them in a large-scale mime of someone holding an ice-cube tray under a hot tap. (Today, a few of these Brobdingnagian plants remain open, and it is from these places that ice sculptors get their ice.)

The early ice manufacturers used saws or heated wires to cut some of the ice blocks into cubes. Other blocks were delivered to domestic users, and to the fishing, chemical, and brewing industries. On the railroads, bunker cars for fruit and vegetables had compartments at each end filled with blocks of ice. It was a thriving industry, important enough to attract criminal interest. Paul Hendler, who works in the New York ice trade—which was, and is, divided between Italian and Jewish families—told me that people often assume that he's a gangster, which he is not. But he conceded that, two generations ago, that assumption might have been more fair. "We're not killing each other anymore, so things are better," he said. "Years ago, there certainly were deals: 'I'll stay in the Bronx, you stay in Queens.'"

The great trade began to fall away in the middle years of the century. The railroad business shrank (thanks to electrically refrigerated trucks), and, in the immediate postwar period, block ice lost out to home refrigerators and then to small commercial ice machines. By the nineteen-sixties, things looked very dark indeed for the old block-ice companies. "It was scary," Dan Detmar, an ice veteran in San Antonio, told me. "Your biggest customers were cafeterias and country clubs, and you'd go out there and they'd say, 'We don't need you no more, we've got ice machines.' You just lost account after account after account, real quick." Detmar was driven to low-level acts of sabotage, like packing snow around ice-machine thermostats.

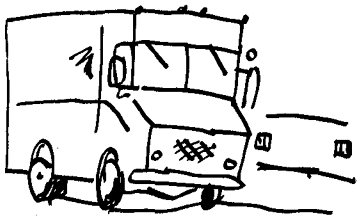
The industry had to reinvent itself. The companies that survived the slump began investing in newly developed industrial-strength ice-cube machines, and by the late sixties American ice was becoming a packaged-ice business. And packaged ice, as it turned out, was exactly what the country needed. These were years of increased leisure time—more barbecues, more cars, more houses by the lake, as well as an expanding network of convenience stores ready to take the product. "Things exploded in the nineteen-seventies," Paul Hendler said. "We were doing double-digit growth, year in, year out, for ten, fifteen years in a row." Ice cubes evolved. Instead of being the clinking accompaniment to adulterous cocktails in Harold Robbins settings, they become abundant and working class—shovelled here and there into picnic coolers and fast-food sodas. They became noisier. (European ice was stuck at an earlier stage of development. Few things are more amusing to an American iceman than a gin-and-tonic in a London pub: the grudging tongs, the single cube.)

Even in those years of growing profitability, the packaged-ice industry remained neighborly and easygoing. "The people in the trade were people you’d like to sit in the back yard and enjoy life with,” Bill Bentley, the editor of the glossy quarterly *Ice World Journal*, said. “They were friends, not just competitive business associates. They were not conglomerate-oriented.” One West Coast ice manufacturer told me, “We had all the business we wanted. You reach a point where you say, ‘I’m happy—why would I want to spend my weekends looking for new customers?’ ” The industry had ambition, but ice cubes did not encourage dreams of empire-building; nobody expected to make a great fortune, and business pride was balanced by self-mockery and continuous, low-level complaining. As Paul Hendler puts it, “The general philosophy among my friends in the ice industry is ‘No matter how hot it is, things suck, we’re losing our shirts.’ ”

This was the world that Jim Stuart joined in the mid-nineteen-eighties: a once-mighty utility now refashioned, with perhaps just a touch of embarrassment, as a key player in the American picnic sector. But Stuart had no intention of sitting in back yards and making friends. What he saw was “an industry in a sad state—mom-and-pops, not reinvesting in their business, no focus, dirty old equipment. I saw an opportunity.”

One evening not long ago, Stuart explained how he had been led into ice. He was born into a conservative Baptist family in southern Mississippi. He took a business degree at the University of Mississippi, joined a management-training program at the Firestone tire company, then ran a dry-cleaning business. It prospered to the point that, in the late sixties, he was able to sell up for a million dollars and retire. Stuart was twenty-eight—a serious young man with short hair and sober habits, untouched by the countercultural moods of the decade. For a year, he took ocean cruises with his wife. When he became bored, he studied for a graduate degree in finance and, at the same time, worked toward professional qualifications as an accountant. He took an accounting job at Arthur Andersen, where he stayed for four years, and, in 1978, he returned to the life of the independent entrepreneur, investing in property, a weight-loss clinic, and a disastrous boat-shaped restaurant in Houston called the Seafood House. He was also advising banks on problem loans—he was a “workout” man. In 1985, Stuart was consulted about an ailing equipment manufacturer in Denison, Texas, called A.I.M. (for Automatic Ice Machine). The machines were designed to make ice cubes and bag them at the point of sale. To Stuart, this was close to alchemy, and he decided to take care of the company’s outstanding loan himself: he put up a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in exchange for seventy or so machines and a region covering seven states in which to operate them exclusively. “What I like are businesses that have an annuity,” he told me. “Money just comes in every month, like an insurance policy. You don’t have to keep selling. You sell them one time, and you get a check every month. I like annuity businesses and I like consumable products: toothpaste or toilet paper. You’re going to use it, and you’ve got to have some more next week.”

As Stuart saw it, the key to success with the ice machines would be to lend them to stores, free, and sell the bags. The principle, he told me, was “Give them the razor, sell the razor blade.” His instinct was sound, but nobody had told him that the machines did not work. They became jammed; there was no automatic shutoff. What he had hoped would become a money-spinning sideline turned into a miserable drain on his time and funds. Stuart pressed on for three years, but eventually he had to concede that the machine was hopelessly flawed. He began to wonder how it could be improved. (He had studied engineering at Mississippi before turning to business.) One evening in 1989, over dinner with a friend in a Houston restaurant, he put his ideas down on a paper napkin, as tradition demands. A better machine would have a sluicing mechanism to clear away blockages. It would be bristling with sensors to detect temperatures and exact levels of ice. It would be able to switch itself on and off. “I was joking,” he recalled. “I said, ‘One day, this napkin is going to make us some money. Won’t you sign it?’ That napkin was the basis of our patent, three years later.”



Like its predecessor, Stuart’s machine would have two main components—an icemaker and an ice bagger. The first part was easy. Stuart could use an adapted version of a commercial ice machine, the hotel-corridor kind. He chose the Japanese company Hoshizaki, which, in the mid-eighties, had made a spirited, almost revolutionary, assault on the rather stagnant ice-machine market, rethinking and simplifying the usual technology to produce a cube that is widely thought to be a little clearer than others and less likely to be joined to its neighbors as it leaves the machine. (According to Gary Brown, the vice-president of sales and marketing of Hoshizaki in the United States, “The cube is so clear, you go into a restaurant that uses Hoshizaki and they bring a glass of ice to the table next to you, you can almost *not see the ice* in the glass.”) Hoshizaki cubes had a novel shape—they were flattened half-cylinders—and in the early days of development in Japan there was anxiety that the American public would reject them. In 1984, a few precious cubes were flown to the United States in an ice chest. They were approved by American experts, and, since then, Hoshizaki has taken a quarter of the market for commercial machines. According to Jim Stuart and others, this success is closely connected to the cube’s performance as a displacer of drink—it has excellent “nestling” properties. (“Nestling” is a beloved buzzword in an industry short of buzzwords.) “We did a test for a guy at a movie theatre,” Brown told me. “We had some of the ice he was using, and some of our ice. We filled two cups with ice, and we weighed them on little electronic scales. And the cups with the Hoshizaki ice weighed more. What that told us was that the guy was getting more ice with our cubes than with the other ones. And then we did a little syrup test, and found that less liquid was required when you used our cubes rather than their old ones. It was twelve to fifteen per cent, depending on the size of the cup.”

Stuart decided to go with a Hoshizaki “crescent” cube—“the finest ice made on a national basis, period,” he says. The other half of the machine—the bagging, sealing, and delivering device—was first developed for Stuart by Hoshizaki, and then refined by the Lancer Corporation, a Texas engineering firm. Stuart had to be patient. (An early model suffered mysterious nighttime breakdowns, and Stuart set up a bed and lay alongside it at night.) But in August, 1992, a prototype of today's Ice Factory was ready to install in a Minimax store in Houston. Stuart was back in the ice business. For the price of the machine, about fifteen thousand dollars, Stuart could now walk straight into a market and start taking customers: no ice plant, no trucks, no labor. (The machine was installed free, but the store picked up the water and electricity costs, and paid for cartridges of plastic bags, at about forty-five cents a bag; a full bag of traditional ice cost about sixty cents.) Suddenly, the hundred-mile-radius rule was irrelevant. A territorial industry lost its sense of territory.

"The point of the Ice Factory is that the ice just magically appears at the point of sale," Stuart told me. "It's just there. It's always there." A few weeks ago, he took me to a bright room in Packaged Ice's national service center, near Hobby Airport, in Houston, where a young woman named Dixie Rogers was looking into her computer screen and trying to decide what was wrong with an Ice Factory on the other side of the country. Unit 1380 had stopped making ice, and—via a pager, a satellite, and the Internet—it had let the service center know. Rogers, who had remote access to all the machine's controls, said, "We can do all kinds of things from here. If we suspect there's a bag sitting on the scale, we can dump it left or right, we can fill a bag from here, we can reset a machine. It's a wonderful tool, a wonderful tool."

I asked her where Unit 1380 was. She looked it up on the screen. "It's the Safeway store on Redmond Way, Seattle," she said. (It was one of the Safeway stores that used to be supplied by Bill Just, the former drummer, who lost them all to the Ice Factory, and who today is slowly turning All Seasons Ice into a haulage firm.) According to an alert code on the screen, the troubled machine might be suffering from a block-

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SHOWCASE BY
JONAS KARLSSON

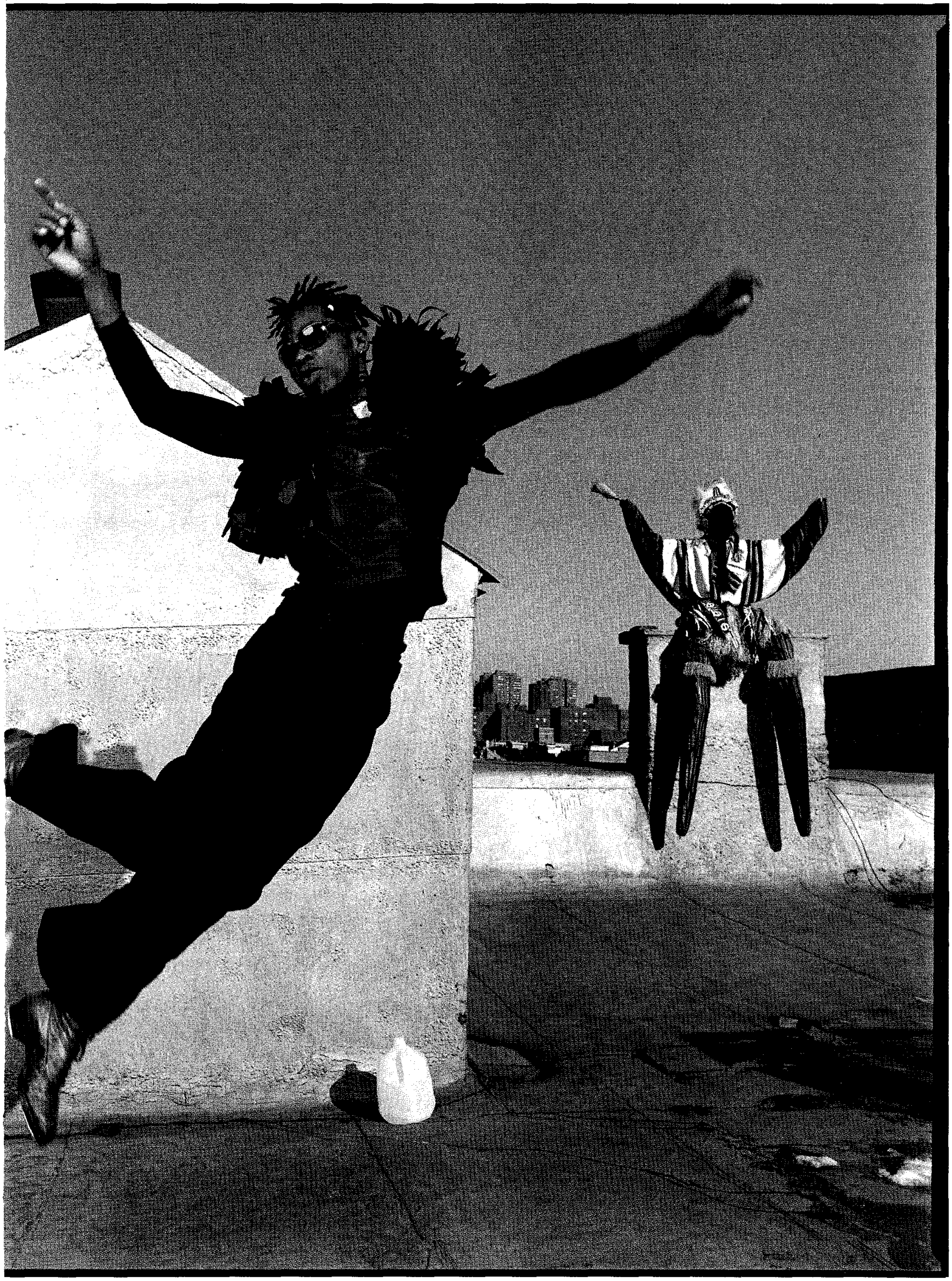
FAIRY TALE

Once upon a time (O.K., in 1974), a nine-year-old boy called Tamango—in honor of the Yoruban spirits Exu and Shango—left his mother in French Guiana to live in Paris with his father. But his father had no time for him, and Tamango was unhappy. Luckily, a baron, Michel Van Cayseele, lived in the same building. The Baron helped the boy with his Latin, and the boy helped the Baron's mother with her sixteen Persian cats, who needed to be brushed constantly for their appearances in cat shows. Everyone was happy, and the Baron adopted Tamango, who took the name Herbin Van Cayseele, and grew up to be the sort of bebop tap dancer who inspires, as one female dance critic confessed, "lustful thoughts."

In 1988, Van Cayseele tossed a coin, and New York beat Rio. At first, he danced wherever he could, busking for change outside clubs and on the Staten Island Ferry. Later, when he was improvising at clubs like La Cave, or on tour with Savion Glover, he came into his own style: fast and chatty with his feet, and loose and free above the waist, one half dancing to the other. He says, "I believe that's what it is: tap . . . dance. I just tap—and I dance it."

Along the way, he picked up a company (and took back his original name): he followed a man on stilts into a restaurant's grand opening, he challenged a Brazilian capoeira master and an Italian trumpeter to join his troupe. Under his direction, the diaspora of disciplines fit together, and the international ensemble Urban Tap, which appears at the New Victory Theatre through February, was born. "I'm a child of the world," Herbin Tamango Van Cayseele says. "It just happened that New York was the place where I found something that reminds me of home."

—*Kevin Conley*



age—an ice "bridge," as Rogers called it. "We're able to actually wash running water to break up an ice bridge, and get things going again," she said. She hit a few keys, and, in a distant supermarket, a jet of water was now pushing ice out of its path, perhaps to the momentary puzzlement of a passerby. Stuart said that sometimes, in supermarkets, he sees customers standing, entranced, in front of an Ice Factory, waiting for a fresh bag of ice to fall from the bagger into the cabinet below.

Stuart installed around a dozen machines in Houston supermarkets in his first two years, and in the fall of 1994 he put in a further fifty across southern Texas. But as they began to spread out across the ice belt Stuart learned that his invention, which could deliver a maximum of three hundred and fifty bags a day, could not satisfy peaks of extreme demand. A machine that could cope with a hot Labor Day weekend in Phoenix would be the size of a house, and an absurd embarrassment for the rest of the year.

Stuart needed backup ice. And in San Antonio he discovered a ready supply. A former attorney named Jack Lewis, the owner of Mission Party Ice, had invested in Stuart's company in 1991. Lewis was Stuart's first link to the traditional ice supply. When the machines reached his area, in the mid-nineties, Lewis was able to step in and support them during busy weekends and breakdowns. It was a comfortable arrangement. And now the moment of revelation arrived. "One day, we woke up and said, 'Wow! Look at these combined financials!'" Lewis says. "We thought, These companies need to come together, and that's when Jim said, 'Would you have any interest in rolling some companies in with Packaged Ice?'"

Stuart had a sudden, bold change of plan. On its own, the Ice Factory could never have taken more than ten or twenty per cent of any market: it could not serve smaller stores or special events; it could not provide "hot-shot" ice—emergency ice delivered on sweaty Friday nights to bars and restaurants whose machines had become overburdened. But Stuart now wanted, as he puts it, to "capture and dominate" the entire industry, and this meant buying traditional ice companies, some of which, alarmed by the Ice Factory, had already approached him. "I would go and place the machine in a city, and within days I would get a phone call from the local ice company, and they would say, 'Let's talk.'" In the spring of 1997, Stuart raised fifty million dollars through the Los Angeles-based investment bank Jefferies & Company. On April 17th, he bought out Jack Lewis in San Antonio and a company in Phoenix, and he hit the road. He was in pursuit of every American ice cube.

MARISA ACOCELLA

"He's your type—gorgeous, successful, and totally unavailable."

"For a lot of people, this was an extremely threatening situation," David Miller, a former Florida iceman, says. "There was a lot of bitterness." To some, Stuart's approaches were quite welcome. To others, they were not. And sometimes the arrival of an Ice Factory helped concentrate a person's mind. (If an ice-plant owner refuses to speak to you, Stuart told me, "you plop a machine down in his city, he'll return the phone call.") Stuart would fly in to a meeting with an ice manufacturer, briskly describe the Ice Factory as a loyal friend and fearsome enemy, and explain the comforts of living under the Packaged Ice umbrella: the owner could stay on, but without the nuisances of payroll, taxes, and insurance. Usually, there would be one or two million dollars on offer, of which at least twenty per cent would be in the form of Packaged Ice stock; the stock was valued, ahead of an initial public offering, at up to thirteen dollars a share. (Stuart had chosen a good moment in the history of American money to be whispering "I.P.O." in a seller's ear.)

Stuart had to move fast. The biggest ice company in the United States, Reddy Ice, of Dallas, had its own takeover plans, and had the backing of a powerful parent, Suiza Foods. Like Packaged Ice, Reddy had caught the scent of a national-ice opportunity at a time when supermarket chains were themselves

CANTICLE FROM THE BOOK OF BOB

We hired the men to carry the coffin,
we hired a woman to sing in our stead.
We hired a limo, we hired a driver,
we hired each lily to stand with its head

held up and held open while Scripture was read.
We hired a dustpan, we hired a broom
to sweep up the pollen that fell in the room
where we'd hired some air

to draw out the stale chord
from the organ we hired.
And we hired some tears because our own eyes were tired.

The pulpit we hired, we hired the priest
to say a few words about the deceased,

and money changed hands
and the process was brief.
We said, "Body of Christ."
Then we hired our grief.

We hired some young men to carry the coffin,
we hired a woman to sing for his soul—
we hired the limo, we hired the driver,
then we hired the ground and we hired the hole.

—*Lucia Perillo*

consolidating, and were hoping to deal with fewer and fewer venders. (Wal-Mart used to buy ice from more than two hundred and fifty companies, but today has just thirteen regional suppliers.)

That spring, Stuart paid a visit to Joy and Sonny Pipkin, who, ten years earlier, had bought a little ice plant in the south Texas town of Refugio. "When I turned forty, I had a mid-life crisis," Joy Pipkin told me. (She used the phrase with partial irony.) "I had never accomplished anything that I could think of, and I really wanted my own business." For some reason—she's not sure why—owning a small local ice company seemed alluring. "I said to my husband, 'Let me do this, I want to do this.' " She soon realized that her hunch had been right; ice suited her. "We did the smallest kind of cube—a cocktail ice, a mini-tube. It was fantastic. It lasted a lot longer, because it was compact and it was really hard. When we were cleaning out the system, I'd pick up one of the cubes and pop it in my mouth. I've got very sensitive teeth, but if I could crack that little cube of ice with my teeth, then it was too soft, I knew we had a problem in the plant somewhere. If I couldn't, then I knew all of our machines were working exactly as they were supposed to."

In 1990, the Pipkins took out a loan for a major expansion and modernization, and nearly tripled their output. Then, in May, 1997, Jim Stuart appeared. "He was strictly all business," Joy Pipkin recalled. "There wasn't a lot of 'How are you, what are your kids doing?'—that kind of thing. He was 'Let's do this. These are the numbers.' Very much the accountant. We'd met some very wonderful people in the business. But the tone was different when you met Packaged Ice. They were the big boys come to town, and they were going to do us a favor." Stuart made an offer to the Pipkins. "We were starting into another long summer," Joy Pipkin said. "And I've not had one minute's doubt that had we not sold we would have wished that we would have—if you can follow that one. Packaged Ice has been known to march a team in and undercut price. And when you're small and you're sitting here with a quarter-million-dollar loan, you don't want to have to go and sell a bag of ice for ten cents."

The Pipkins sold their business to Packaged Ice. Over the following year, Stuart, working the ice belt tirelessly, bought up fifty-one other ice companies. "Which is almost impossible," he said. "When people on Wall Street hear about it, they say, 'How could you have done it?' " In the spring of 1998, in an extraordinary coup, Packaged Ice bought Reddy Ice, and all its acquisitions, for a hundred and seventy-two million dollars. Jim Stuart had the largest ice company in the world.

In the great freezer vault of Stuart's new ice plant, in Austin, bags of ice are stacked to a height of twenty-five feet. Walking to the center of the room, you find yourself rooted to the spot—partly out of wonderment (the first sight of an unfamiliar manufacturing process is strangely uplifting, perhaps because such mysteries now seem a little less mysterious), and partly because your shoes are frozen to the ground. If you stop moving in an ice plant, you risk becoming stuck.

The Austin plant is just a year and a half old, and it is as modern and streamlined and sanitized as an ice plant can be. "I don't care where you go, you won't see an ice plant like this!" Stuart told me. The plant has something of the feel of a SPECTRE bunker in an early James Bond movie: men in company shirts move around with swift solemnity, and there is a constant *whoop-whoop* of claxons, as if the factory were about to explode in an enormous ball of fire. There are five icemaking machines here—towering blue columns that each make in two days what Joy Pipkin was making in a week. They release their loads with a crash every thirteen minutes—a thousand pounds of ice per crash. ("The sound of money," Stuart said.) Before the cubes are bagged and processed, by a dozen cold-looking men in gloves and blue overalls, they wait their turn in a "raking room," which contains two rectangular metal bins, each the size of a

"Now is the time to heal the country by ridding ourselves of the unwell."

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barn. I was encouraged to climb up the outside of one, twenty feet up a freezing vertical metal ladder. Standing below, on the floor of his own factory, Stuart looked oddly out of place—a campaigning politician in a firefighter's hat. You could see him as his competitors see him—a man who one day wandered into their world from an accountant's office. Shivering, I looked down into the bins, where two hundred tons of ice cubes were spread out in a wide, beautiful landscape of cliffs and ravines. Somewhere, a button was pressed, and the solid landscape became fluid. There were sudden avalanches. With a roar, hundreds of thousands of ice cubes were sucked away to the bagging room.

Jim Stuart now makes more than a billion ice cubes a day. Since the Reddy takeover, his company's expansion has had to slow down, but he was able to make twenty-four acquisitions in 1999, and seven last year. In the consolidation process, some plants have been shut down, but Packaged Ice has seventy-one plants, operating in twenty-seven states. And it is in those plants that most of the company's cubes are produced; there are about twenty-eight hundred Ice Factories in place, but their share of P.I.'s output has now fallen to just ten per cent. Stuart likes to call his invention a "disruptive technology," a term borrowed from "The Innovator's Dilemma," a book about responses to technological change by the Harvard Business School professor Clayton M. Christensen, which Stuart likes to offer as a gift. (A disruptive technology is one for which a conventionally well-prepared company is not well prepared.) In the event, the Ice Factory revised the disruptive model described by Christensen, because it did not supersede the old industry but instead unnerved it, weakened it, and then withdrew, allowing Stuart to step up in a flurry of cash and pre-I.P.O. stock. The Ice Factory could be called a henchman technology—and it has allowed Packaged Ice to grow to four times the size of its nearest competitor, the Canadian Arctic Group. Packaged Ice now commands about ten per cent of the national packaged-ice market and roughly seventy-five per cent in Texas, Arizona, and Florida. It has the beginnings of a national brand—Reddy Ice. It was Reddy Ice at this year's Super Bowl, and is at many NASCAR racetracks and in prisons across the South. (Ice sends a little gust of compassion through Stuart's conservatism. "Prisoners have to have cold drinks in their hot cells," Stuart told me, smiling.) As a dominant player, Stuart claims to be fielding calls each week from "little-bitty" ice companies looking for a buyer. "But they're just little mom-and-pops. That kind of business we can just go and take if we wanted it bad. Just go in and take the business from them, easy."

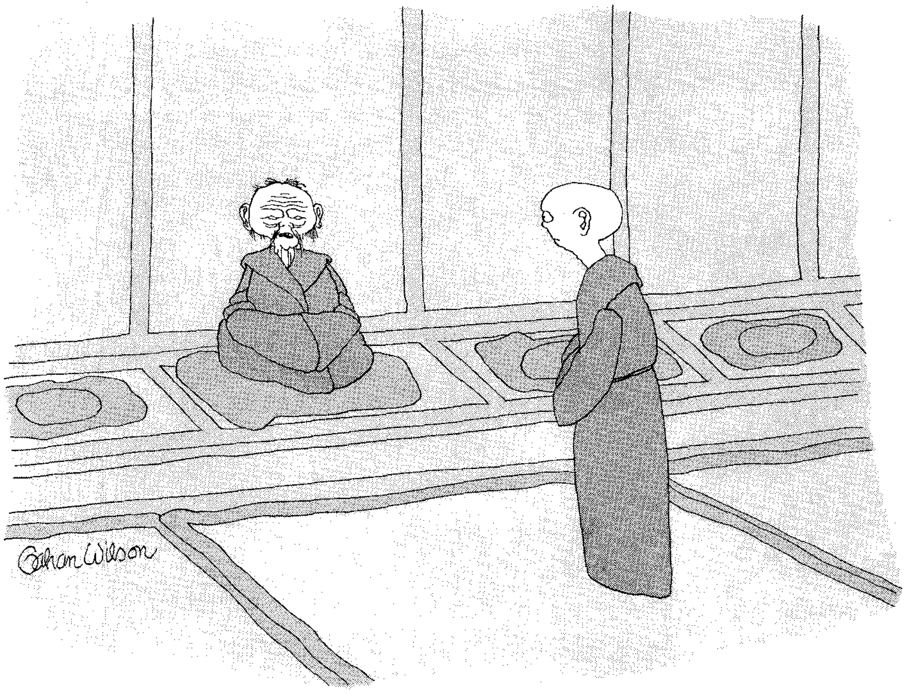
Stuart still has competition. The Arctic Group is expanding south of the border, buying up small American companies, and it has developed its own in-store bagging machine. Meanwhile, Stuart is fighting a battle for control of ice in California, where a crucial market-leading company has refused to sell up to Packaged Ice. At a meeting in 1996, Steve Gabriel, whose family has owned the Los Angeles-based Mountain Water Ice since 1925, turned down Stuart's offer to buy out his firm and his partners'—among them they control more than half of the California market. "We had no intention to sell," Gabriel says. "The offers they were making to some were wonderful, but to us it just wasn't worth it. We were comfortable, we were happy doing what we were doing. We've been doing this for a long time, and we will continue to do it."

It's not clear, today, if Stuart can finish his task—whether this former accountant, who works out of an unprepossessing single-story office in Houston, can make all of American ice his own. In less than four years, he has raised his company's revenues from four and a half million dollars a year to two hundred and fifty million dollars. But you would understand if he had moments of uncertainty in those quiet hours before he turns to the Weather Channel each morning. His company has debts of two hundred and seventy million dollars. Packaged Ice was the tenth worst-performing I.P.O. of 1999; that January, its stock opened at eight dollars and fifty cents a share and has since fallen to two dollars, dismaying many ice manufacturers who sold out to him. ("I know a lot of people that are kicking themselves in the ass" is how Bill Just, in Seattle, puts it.) Stuart takes fairly regular punches on the Internet stock message boards. And in this period of rapid expansion and disruption it is perhaps inevitable that there have been complaints both about customer care and competitive practices. Robert Pierce, who owns American Ice, in Dallas—the heart of Packaged Ice country—says that in the summer of 1999 he was taking ten or fifteen calls a day from disgruntled P.I. customers. (That number, he says, has since fallen.) One call was from a company in Fort Worth: "This guy rips into P.I. He says, 'I've been out of ice for two weeks, can you get me ice?'" Pierce delivered two full chests of ice the next day. Three days later, the customer told him that he was going back to P.I. "I said, 'What kind of deal did they sell you?' The guy said, 'Well, they promised me two thousand free bags.'" "That ain't true," Stuart says. Such complaints, he claims, are unfounded, and are based on professional rivalry.

But, beyond all this, Stuart has to contend with the stubborn immutability of the product. Ice is unchanged by change; water purity aside, consolidated ice is exactly the same as unconsolidated ice. And the only significant business relationship an emerging ice king has is with his retailers: everything comes down to how much, how soon. There is no brand loyalty, and there is rarely more than one brand in a supermarket—a status ice shares with bananas, perhaps, but with few other goods. Nobody will ever ask for his product by its name. Indeed, a person could take over the entire ice industry without unsettling a single ice user, without a single consumer ever noticing. Which means that anyone—with almost any bag of frozen water—could take away an ice king's customer at any time. So a modern ice empire, however imposing, also looks vulnerable. "It doesn't get any better than that," Stuart said as we drove away from his vast Austin ice plant. But his tone seemed to carry slight surprise that things had come so far, that he really was the ice entrepreneur he claims to be.

"Packaged Ice is leaving the door wide open," Joy Pipkin said. "If you don't give service, if you don't give quality product, there's always going to be somebody out there who will." After selling out, she stayed on to run her "neat little plant" for Stuart, but she found life increasingly difficult in the Packaged Ice empire. "The stress and the pressure with their accounting system was unbelievable," she said. "They had a lady accountant up there—whoo-hoo howdy! She should have been with Patton during World War Two—'Look, this is what I need on my desk at such and such a time! And if you don't have it here by ten o'clock, lady, well find somebody who can do it!'" Relations with Packaged Ice's head office became increasingly strained.

To Joy Pipkin, it seemed as if the company were looking for trouble. "There was a lot of nitpicky stuff, things that should not have bothered anyone." And, in September, 1999, Packaged Ice ceased production at the plant, and Joy was out of a job. "They came in and said, 'You're going as of Thursday.'" Her husband left a few weeks later, when Packaged Ice—consolidating its holdings in the area—closed down the plant altogether. By the end of the year, the building had been gutted and sold. Joy Pipkin is glad that she lives at one end of town, and that the plant is at the other; she never has to pass it. "I took it a lot harder than my husband," she said. "I wasn't angry. I was disappointed. I don't let angry get in there too much. It can destroy your life. I was bitterly disappointed." As part of her deal with Stuart, she had signed a five-year agreement not to compete with P.I. But, when that agreement expires, she may step back into the ice business, and start afresh. "I would like to give them another run at it," she told me. She misses the business; she misses the feeling she used to get at the end of the day. "I'd go into the office after I was done, and I'd be so exhausted I couldn't move," she said. "I'd tell my husband, 'I'm so tired I can hardly wiggle, but the hair on the back of my neck is standing up. That freezer vault is beautiful. Go in there and look at all that packaged ice!'" ♦



"You can't handle the meaning of life!"

PROFILES

LORD REBOUND

Can Jeffrey Archer escape trouble one more time?

BY JOHN CASSIDY

Jeffrey Archer, the Conservative peer and best-selling novelist, took a deep breath in the witness box. "Sir James, if I'd wanted to poison my wife I could have taken any amount of ampoules from the hospital pharmacy without getting involved with Miss Mitchell," he said angrily. "The truth is that during that last unhappy year I tended to my wife's needs every night and day. I only wish I'd spent more time with her and I wouldn't be standing in front of you." The sentences tumbled on top of each other in an impressive fit of pique, but the jury was not convinced by Archer's protestations of innocence. He was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison, with a recommendation from Justice Cartwright that he serve at least seventeen years. "May God have mercy on your soul," the Judge added solemnly as the defendant was led from the dock.

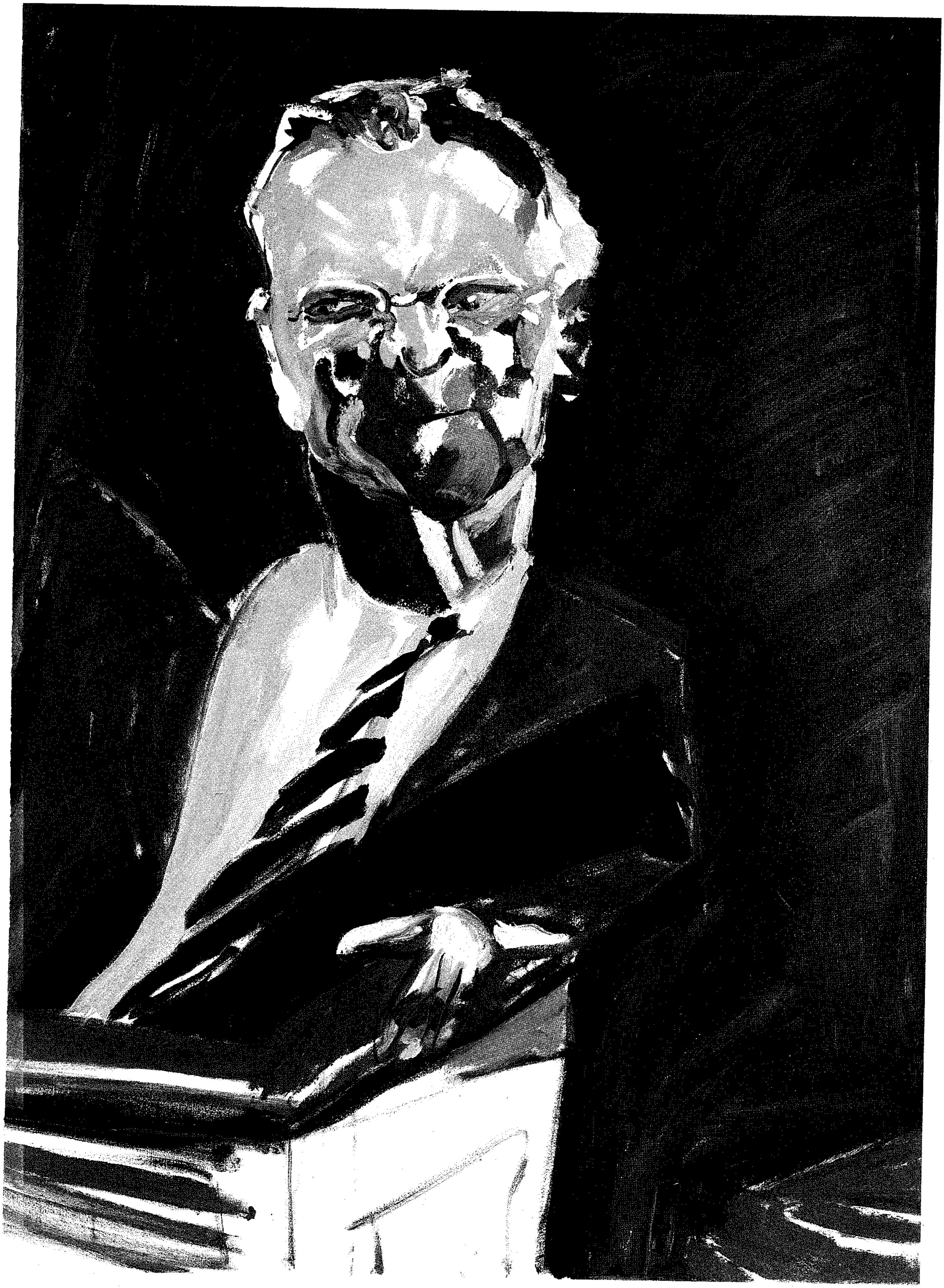
Within minutes, Archer, whose books include "Kane and Abel," "The Prodigal Daughter," and "First Among Equals," was back onstage, smiling broadly. He had just played the lead role in his own play, "The Accused," a courtroom drama about a surgeon, Dr. Sherwood, accused of poisoning his wife with potassium chloride in the hope of cashing in a life-insurance policy. The members of the audience at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford, an affluent town thirty miles southwest of London, applauded enthusiastically as Archer took a series of curtain calls. If nothing else, it was good practice. In May, he will step into a real dock at the Old Bailey, England's most storied courthouse, to face five counts, including perjury and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

The charges, which could result in a long jail sentence, concern a libel case in 1987, in which Archer sued the *Daily Star*, a Fleet Street tabloid, for suggesting that he had slept with a prostitute the previous year. At the time he was accused, Archer was the deputy chairman of the Conservative Party and a close confidant of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. After a three-week trial, the jury accepted his claim that he had never met the streetwalker in question and awarded him half a million pounds in damages, plus legal costs. In late 1999, however, while Archer was standing as the Conservative candidate in the election for mayor of London, the libel case returned to the front pages when a friend of Archer's, after twelve years' silence, came forward and claimed that he had provided Archer with a false alibi for a night on which the assignation was said to have taken place. He also said that at about the same time Archer had invested in one of his business ventures. A few days later, another potential witness emerged and said that Archer had given him money to go abroad during the libel trial.

Archer's bid for the mayoralty collapsed. Instead of running for office, he found himself drummed out of the Conservative Party, pilloried by Fleet Street, and investigated by Scotland Yard. He retreated to his country home in Grantchester, near Cambridge, reëmerging nine months later with "The Accused," a play that placed him at the center of a fictional trial while he was preparing for a genuine one. Last fall, on the day Archer was arrested and charged, he went straight from Wimbledon Police Station to Windsor, where he made his stage début that evening. The production I saw in Guildford was the last before "The Accused" moved to the West End. Archer's performance was a little awkward—he is

ILLUSTRATION BY PHILIP BURKE

Archer is very good at reinventing himself, but his political career has been derailed again by a new trial stemming from an alleged meeting with a prostitute.



no Olivier—but there was enough in the play's blend of fact and fiction to engage the audience. The set resembled the Old Bailey, a typical Archer touch. The script contained references to tabloid reporters, unfaithful husbands, and even the condition of Archer's skin. During the libel trial, the prostitute had said that one of the things she remembered about her encounter with Archer was his pimply back. A less brazen character would have blanched at the dredging up of this detail. Archer exploited it as a plot twist. In the climactic scene, he took off his shirt to reveal a back that was hideously scarred, prompting embarrassed laughter from the stalls. When the play ended, the audience acted as the jury, holding up signs saying "Not Guilty" and "Guilty" that were counted to determine the verdict. "He's guilty as sin, but it's not beyond reasonable doubt," a dissenter behind me said.

Perjury, conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, and consorting with prostitutes are by no means the only untoward acts Jeffrey Archer has been linked to over the years. The list includes misstating his ancestry, padding his résumé, fiddling his expenses, shoplifting, and insider trading. With each new accusation, Archer denied any wrongdoing and continued defiantly on his way. He has survived so many scrapes that the British newspapers sometimes refer to him as Lord Rebound.

Between 1979 and 1997, when the Conservatives were in power, Archer was an instantly recognizable presence in British politics: the cocky, ebullient, and affluent face of Thatcherism. Though Archer never held a Cabinet position, he was close to both Thatcher and her successor, John Major. It was Major who recommended Archer for a life peerage, in 1992, thereby entitling him to call himself Baron Archer of Weston-super-Mare of Mark in the County of Somerset. Understatement has never been part of Archer's character; neither have modesty, reserve, or any of the other traditional English virtues. In a country where being seen to try hard is still considered bad form, he is the ultimate striver and self-promoter, an English combination of Trump and Gatsby. Even now, he betrays no signs of concern.

I visited Archer recently at his London home, a large penthouse apartment that sits atop a thirteen-story office building directly across the Thames from the Tate Gallery. The elevator doors opened onto an Andy Warhol silk screen of Marilyn Monroe. A butler appeared and led me to an L-shaped living room with floor-to-ceiling windows offering skyline views of central London, from Battersea Power Station in the west to St. Paul's Cathedral in the east. The room was furnished with soft couches and a Henry Moore sculpture. On the walls hung a Seurat, several Lowrys, and a Monet of Westminster.

"Is it dark in here or is it just California?"

Archer came in and sat down. He is a young-looking sixty, the product of vigorous daily workouts. He was wearing a navy-blue suit, a light-blue shirt, and a dark tie. His hair was cropped short, military style, above a big forehead that was permanently furrowed, shaggy gray eyebrows, wide-set blue eyes, a pointed nose, and a thin mouth with slightly protruding front teeth. He spoke in clipped tones that were difficult to place geographically and socially. He told me that he got the idea of developing a murder mystery for the stage three years ago, but found time to write it only after his mayoral candidacy imploded. "You need to do something; you need to keep the body and the brain moving," he said. "The last thing you need to do is sit around and feel sorry for yourself."

The fact that previews of "The Accused" started in Windsor on the day of Archer's arrest was good publicity, but Archer conceded that he had been nervous about the reaction. As things turned out, he needn't have worried, he told me. "They cheer from the stalls, they scream and shout when I'm out in the street, they come up for autographs," he said, demonstrating an established gift for interpreting even the most daunting setbacks positively. "I think, perhaps, if one dares to say it, they look at thirty years and not thirty minutes. They look at all the charity work, they look at all the public work unpaid, and they say, 'Wait a minute.' "

Running for mayor of London was supposed to be the culmination of Archer's career, but it turned into a humiliation. He must have been shaken by the experience, but he wasn't showing it. Yes, he had badly wanted to be mayor, but he insisted to me that he knew it was unlikely once Ken Livingstone, a popular former head of the Greater London Council, entered the race as an independent candidate. (Livingstone won the election easily.) And he was thrilled to be appearing onstage, he said, something he had always wanted to do. Three weeks earlier, he couldn't even breathe like an actor—through the nose, holding in the diaphragm so that he could say several lines in a row as he exhaled. He sat up in his chair and gave me a demonstration.

Archer has a hot temper. A few days earlier, he had shown the door to a reporter who delved too deeply into his legal troubles. When I asked him if he was concerned about the possibility of going to jail, he brushed me off with a curt "No comment," adding that it was not his style to worry about the future. Surely, anybody in his position would be concerned, I said. "Yes," he replied. "But if you knew all the facts you might not be too worried."

Victoria Roberts

"It's too late for a nose job and too early for a face-lift."

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Archer was born in London on April 15, 1940. He used to say that his father, William Archer, was a colonel in the Somerset Light Infantry who had received a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his service in the First World War. But the British Army has no record of Archer's father's having served as an officer, let alone of his being awarded a medal. This is hardly surprising, because William Archer was, in fact, a grifter pursued by the police in three countries: Britain, Canada, and the United States. He arrived in New York in 1916, posing as William Grimwood, a British Army surgeon who had been wounded in the war. Soon afterward, he met a well-to-do twenty-two-year-old, Florence Brainerd. The couple got married, moved to Washington, and had a daughter. In 1917, Grimwood was arrested for procuring charitable donations under false pretenses. When his wife learned that he was an impostor, she left him. He was locked up for ten months, and then moved to Canada, where he was arrested again before finally being deported to England.

In the early nineteen-thirties, Archer's mother, Lola, met William Archer. They married in 1939. Shortly after Jeffrey was born, they moved to Somerset. At eleven, Jeffrey won a scholarship to a private school. He was so skinny that he was known as "the Pune," but he demonstrated the determination that served him well later in life by becoming an athlete. He ran for Somerset in the national schools championship, where he met Adrian Metcalfe, a future Olympic medallist and television sports commentator, who was running for Yorkshire. "Even then, Jeffrey was drilling the relay team," Metcalfe recalled. "We were faster, but they were more disciplined, and they beat us. That is typical Jeffrey."

Archer left school with few qualifications. During the next few years, he dropped out of the Army and the London police force, worked as a bartender, spent some time in San Francisco, and ended up as a teacher of physical education. In 1963, his life changed forever when he was admitted to Brasenose College, Oxford, to pursue a diploma in education intended primarily for graduate students. Exactly how Archer got into Oxford remains a mystery. According to one account, recorded in a critical biography of Archer by Michael Crick, a writer and broadcaster, Archer's application included a letter from the school where he taught, which said he had passed six O levels and three A levels and that he had completed a two-year anatomy course at the University of California and qualified as a fellow of the International Federation of Physical Culture. Archer denies having submitted such a letter, but if he did it was misleading. Crick could find no record of Archer's having got any A levels or having attended the University of California. He may have received a certificate from the International Federation of Physical Culture, but this grand-sounding organization was actually a London-based bodybuilding club that offered mail-order courses in weight training.

Archer's studies were meant to last a year, but he stayed in Oxford for three, lodging in a house near the university's running track with Metcalfe, who was then an undergraduate at Magdalen. Archer competed in the annual varsity matches against Cambridge, and he also ran for Britain. He was elected president of the Oxford University Athletic Club and was active in student politics, at the Oxford Union, and in charity work. "At Oxford then, there was a fashion to be laid back, to never appear to be ambitious," John Bryant, a consultant editor at the *Daily Mail* who has known Archer since 1964, told me. "Jeffrey was from another planet as far as that was concerned. Almost his first statement to me was 'I want to be Minister of Sport. What's your ambition?' " Archer's unvarnished self-promotion alienated many of his fellow-students. "People said, 'Oh, Jeffrey Archer, he's such a mountebank,'" Metcalfe recalled. "But they didn't do anything—they didn't even talk about doing anything. Jeffrey was being patronized, but he was running for Britain."

Toward the end of 1963, Archer attracted national attention for the first time by persuading the Beatles to visit Oxford to raise money for Oxfam, the hunger-relief organization. When the band arrived, a few months later, he took them to Vincent's, a social club for Oxford sporting types. According to Archer legend, George Harrison remarked that, given half a chance, Archer would bottle the Beatles' urine and sell it. Some months later, the pushy young impresario talked his way into the Oval Office, where President Johnson signed some recordings of Winston Churchill's speeches which were later auctioned for Oxfam.

At Oxford, Archer also met his future

wife, Mary Weeden, a beautiful but shy girl who was studying chemistry at St. Anne's College. Mary had many suitors, but none as relentless or as disarming as Archer. "There was a wildness about Jeffrey that Mary found attractive," Metcalfe, who was Archer's best man, said. "She'd never met anybody like him." They married in the summer of 1966 and moved to London, where Mary started graduate school. Jeffrey took a job as a professional fund-raiser and set out, as he reportedly told his wife, to become Prime Minister. Minister of Sport was no longer enough.

Three years later, at just twenty-nine, Archer was elected as the Conservative Member of Parliament for Louth, in Lincolnshire. He seemed to have a promising future ahead of him, but in the early seventies he borrowed money and invested heavily in the stock of a small Canadian company, Aquablast, which was said to have invented a new anti-pollution device for cars. The miraculous product never materialized, Aquablast's stock plummeted, and Archer was left in serious financial trouble. He was served with a bankruptcy notice by one of his creditors, and in August of 1974 he resigned from the House of Commons, admitting that he had been foolish to get involved in such a speculative investment.

Archer still says that almost going bankrupt was the worst event in his life. "To be in debt is the most terrible thing," he told me. "Not to be able to pay the next bill coming through the door. To dread the brown envelopes, terrible." Archer used his traumatic experience as the basis for his first novel, "Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less," which describes how four duped investors take their revenge on an American stock swindler. The sudden transformation from politician to novelist astonished even Archer's closest friends. "We were driving up to Scotland for a friend's wedding, a six- or seven-hour drive," Metcalfe recalls. "I said, 'Jeffrey, what are you going to do?' He said, 'What can I do? I could get a good salary, but that's not going to pay off two or three hundred thousand pounds in debt. What I have to do, I have to write a best-seller—not just a novel, not just a book, a best-seller. All I need to do that is a lot of paper and a lot of pencils.' I said, 'Jeffrey. How can you write a novel? You can't even spell.' He said, 'That doesn't matter. I can tell stories.'"

The royalties from "Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less" helped Archer to pay off his creditors. He repeated his success with a second novel, "Shall We Tell the President?," about a plot to assassinate a future President Ted Kennedy (not such a fantastic notion in 1977, when the book appeared). In 1979, Archer published "Kane and Abel," which was on the New York *Times* best-seller list for twenty-nine weeks and turned him into a literary franchise. More than a hundred and twenty million copies of his books have been sold.

Archer's writing is often sneered at by critics, and not without reason. In many of his books, the characters are thin, the dialogue stiff, the plots unlikely. (In "Honor Among Thieves," which was published in 1993, readers are asked to believe that the original Declaration of Independence has been stolen at the behest of Saddam Hussein.) But Archer can undoubtedly spin a yarn, and he is extremely industrious. When he's working on a first draft, he follows a strict timetable. He gets up at five in the morning, then writes in four two-hour stints—from six to eight, ten to twelve, two to four, and six to eight—and goes to bed at ten. "On subsequent drafts, I still work on the same timetable, but I am not under the same pressure, because the first draft is there," Archer told me. He doesn't object to being edited, and he is a diligent rewriter. "The Accused," for example, was rewritten four or five times after it opened in Windsor. "People who read the first draft—the director, one or two others—thought it was very even, but the audience voted not guilty straightaway," he said. "So I had to do a rewrite putting in some more evidence against Dr. Sherwood. I think it's now balanced towards guilt, but the audiences are still basically fifty-fifty. I can't do much about that, short of coming on with a dagger dripping with blood and saying, 'I did it. I did it.'"

Once Archer became a best-selling author, he was able to resurrect his political career. He appeared at Conservative Party events all over Britain, recounting his uplifting story of almost going broke and saving himself with his writing. He raised a lot of money for the Party, and he also began acting as the auctioneer at charity auctions, something he has done ever since. (While Diana, Princess of Wales, was alive, he often helped raise money for her favorite charities.) Word of Archer's growing popularity reached Margaret Thatcher. Archer was never a Thatcherite in the ideological sense: in the early nineteen-seventies, he attacked her decision, as Minister of Education, to abolish free milk for many schoolchildren. But the two did share similar political instincts. Thatcher loved to surround herself with assertive, self-made men who shared her disdain for the British class system. Archer, like Thatcher, was an outsider. With his provincial upbringing and gauche manner, he was anathema to the Tory grandees, many of whom looked down on him. But that only endeared him to Thatcher—as did the fact that, unlike many Britons, he had no qualms about celebrating his material success.

Archer, for his part, proved to be an assiduous courtier, never missing a public opportunity to praise Thatcher and to publicize his links to her. In September, 1985, Archer's loyalty was rewarded with the prestigious, though unpaid, post of deputy chairman of the Conservative Party. He was to keep the job just thirteen months. On Sunday, October 26, 1986, the *News of the World*, Britain's best-selling tabloid, ran a front-page story headlined "TORY BOSS ARCHER PAYS OFF VICE GIRL." The accompanying photograph showed a friend of Archer's handing an envelope full of cash to a woman on a platform at Victoria Station. While the story was still on the newsstands, Archer resigned, claiming that he was the victim of entrapment.

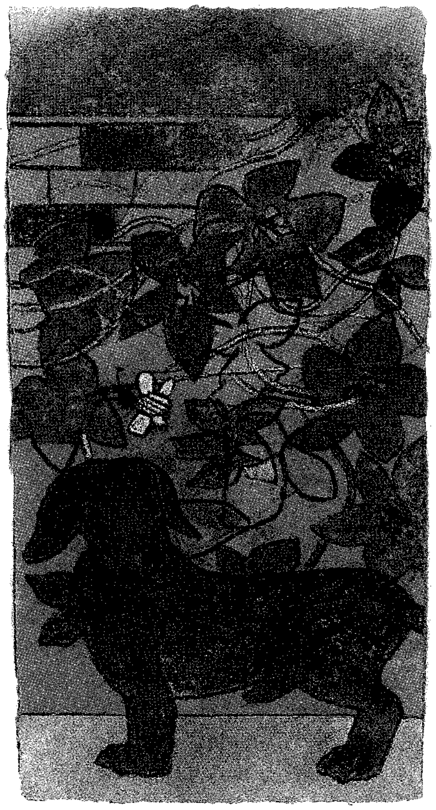
He had a point. The unedifying saga had begun when an Asian businessman who claimed to have seen Archer with a prostitute in Shepherd Market, Mayfair, tipped off the *News of the World*. The newspaper's proprietor, Rupert Murdoch, was a supporter of the Thatcher government, but for a publication known on Fleet Street as the "News of the Screws" this was too good a story to pass over for political reasons. A reporter tracked down the prostitute, Monica Coghlan, a thirty-five-year-old single mother from Rochdale, Lancashire, who said that Archer had paid for her services. A couple of reporters then had Coghlan call Archer repeatedly to complain that she was being harassed by journalists. In the conversations, which were taped, Archer denied knowing Coghlan. At one point, he even advised her to go to the police. The *News of the World* was almost ready to give up when Archer offered Coghlan money to leave the country, arranging for her to pick it up from a friend of his at Victoria.

The story, and Archer's political career, might have ended there if the *Daily Star* hadn't followed up with another piece, headlined "VICE GIRL MONICA TALKS ABOUT ARCHER—THE MAN SHE KNEW." After this story appeared, Archer's lawyers issued libel writs against the *Daily Star* and the *News of the World*, on the ground that their client had never met Coghlan, let alone had sex with her. Archer claimed that he had offered Coghlan the money in an ill-fated attempt to avoid bad publicity.

During the libel case against the *Daily Star*, which took place in July, 1987, Coghlan described how Archer picked her up in Mayfair, then took her to a nearby hotel and paid her seventy pounds for sex. When Archer was questioned, he said he had never met Coghlan, and he provided an alibi for the night in question: he had had dinner with friends, then driven one of them home. The most memorable testimony came from Mary Archer, who contradicted Coghlan by claiming that her husband had smooth skin. The very idea of him consorting with a prostitute was "preposterous," she said. She and Jeffrey continued to "lead a full life" together. Justice Bernard Caulfield, the elderly judge, was smitten. "Remember Mary Archer in the witness box," he said in his summing up. "Your vision of her will probably never disappear. Has she elegance? Has she fragrance? Would she have, without the strain of this trial, radiance?" With such a wife, how could Archer be "in need of cold, unloving, rubber-insulated sex in a seedy hotel?" The jury decided in Archer's favor. A week after the verdict, the Archers held a party at their country house, which was attended by several Cabinet ministers, including the Lord Chancellor, the most senior judge in England and Wales. Three months later, the *News of the World* settled out of court, paying Archer fifty thousand pounds in damages.

Coghlan, her story rejected, returned to Rochdale, a working-class town in

TAKES



RICHARD MERKIN

By August a flower garden, at least on the coast of eastern Maine, where I live, can be at its best—and at its worst. Most of one's successes are apparent, and all of one's failures. For me, this year, heavy memories remain from spring of the disaster area in the north bed of old-fashioned roses, where field mice, hungry under a snowdrift, stripped the bark off the bushes and killed two-thirds of them. Like all disaster areas, this one is still, although replanted, rather bleak. A more recent sorrow is the sudden death on the terrace of a well-established Jackmani clematis, which turned black overnight just as its big purple blossoms were opening. There are numerous theories in the household about this loss—too heavy a dose of fertilizer, too much watering, too strong a spray drifting over from the nearby rose beds, a disease still undiagnosed. My own theory is dachshund trouble. Our dachshund is a robin-and-bee hound, not a badger hound. A robust dog, he flings himself with abandon at birds, bees, and fireflies. Once he caught a barn swallow on the wing. Bees swarm all over the clematis bed, attracted by the petunias and violas, the foxgloves and lilies that we grow in front of the clematis, to give the vines the recommended "cool root run." I think the dachshund mortally wounded the Jackmani vine in a scuffle with a bee, for the other large-flowered clematis vines in that bed are spreading their mauve and mulberry stars all over the cedar windbreak, and the roses are in their second surge of bloom. The terrace, despite its accident, is one of our successes, and so, it would seem, are the long borders of perennials, with their masses of hardy phlox, which, because it is mid-August, are in full color. Yet a closer look at the borders will show that even here all is not well. The wars of aggression that I thought our private Security Council and its little army of two, armed with spade, fork, and trowel, had settled in early spring have started again. The lolloping day lilies have begun to blot out the delicate columbines, the clumps of feathery white achilleas are strangling the far more precious delphiniums, and the phlox itself is at the throats of the lupines and the Canterbury bells.

—Katharine S. White
Onward and Upward in the Garden,
September 24, 1960

“Grab some lederhosen, Sutfin. We're about to climb aboard the globalization bandwagon.”

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the foothills of the Pennines, and wasn't heard from again until November, 1999, when Archer's version of events unravelled. “Twelve years ago, I sat in that court, looked directly at him and told the truth,” she subsequently told the *Mirror* in an interview. “I called him a liar—but he just smirked. I walked out of there with my life in tatters. He humiliated me. They all did. Him, his wife, the barristers, the judge. They made me feel cheap, worthless and dirty—something I'd never felt through all my years on the streets. I was alone. I was powerless. I was nobody.”

In 1990, after Thatcher was forced to resign as Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party, Archer helped organize John Major's campaign to succeed her. The two got on well. Both were sports buffs who had risen from modest backgrounds with few formal qualifications. Major was sensitive to criticism, and Archer took advantage of this to ingratiate himself. “Here is this embattled Prime Minister, being criticized on all fronts, sitting by himself in Downing Street,” one of Major's aides told Max Hastings, the editor of the London *Evening Standard*. “In bounds this figure saying, ‘Prime Minister, I've been trying to decide on the way over whether historians will compare you to Palmerston or Disraeli.’ ” Even Hastings, a longtime critic of Archer, wasn't totally immune to his charms. “He grabbed me by the arm at a party and said, ‘Max, I've been reading your book on the Normandy landings. It's the best book I've ever read,’ ” Hastings told me recently. “I came out of there thinking, Perhaps I've been too harsh on him.”

It was during the Major era that Archer reached his peak of access and self-importance. He had never been a significant figure in policymaking, but he was influential in putting the government's case to the media. After the Gulf War ended, he helped organize a fund-raising campaign for the Kurds that raised tens of millions of pounds. During the 1992 general election campaign, he stumped tirelessly for Major, and after the Conservatives surprised the pundits by winning reëlection he was rewarded with a life peerage.

But Archer's success wasn't based solely on his friendship with the Prime Minister. Westminster, with its low salaries and thirsty journalists, will always be vulnerable to ambitious outsiders with money. Archer recognized these weaknesses and exploited them. All it took was gall and a few cases of champagne: Archer's annual Krug and Shepherd's Pie Party at the Conservative Party Conference was the social highlight of the political season. “Jeffrey would come up and say, ‘Peter, I will not have gate-crashers,’ ” Peter McKay, a gossip columnist at the *Daily Mail*, recalled. “You'd think, Why not? He'd gate-crashed the English establishment his entire life.”

Archer's relationship with Fleet Street mirrored his uneasy relationship with the Conservative Party. Many of the journalists who were writing about him knew he was a fibber, but a combination of legal threats, hospitality, and the desire to maintain access to a valuable source inside the government kept them from exposing him. Archer once told Julia Langdon, a veteran Westminster reporter who was then political editor at the *Sunday Telegraph*, that he had visited Downing Street on the eve of a Cabinet reshuffle. As Archer told the tale, he followed Major to his bathroom and sat on his lavatory, lid down, while Major shaved and discussed which ministers were for the chop. The next time Langdon saw Major, she asked him about the story. “Not only would I never have discussed Cabinet reshuffles with Jeffrey Archer, I have never been in a bathroom with him,” he replied. Asked recently about his story, Archer continued to assert that it was “one hundred per cent true.”

There was a general feeling on Fleet Street that Archer, while undoubtedly a rogue, was not a villainous person. McKay's attitude was pretty typical. “I think he's an absolute twister, but he's never really harmed anybody,” he said. Over the years, Archer was close friends with the editors of at least five major newspapers: the *Times*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Daily Express*, the *Sunday Express*, and the (short-lived) *Sunday Correspondent*. He always returned journalists' calls, and he would often help them out with a story if they were stuck. “We did business for thirty years,” Langdon recalled. “It was a business relationship.”

In 1990, HarperCollins closed a three-book deal with Archer reportedly worth more than twenty million dollars. (Archer denies the figure.) Whatever the exact sum, it was apparently enough to persuade Archer to ignore the fact that his new publisher was part of the same company that owned the *News of the World*. Given Archer's wealth, it was all the more surprising when, in 1994, he was investigated for insider trading. He placed buy orders for fifty thousand shares in Anglia Television, a commercial broadcaster, just days before the company announced a takeover offer that made its stock rise sharply. He said the shares were for a friend, but the timing was suspicious, as was the fact that Mary Archer was a non-executive director of Anglia Television and had been kept informed of the firm's internal discussions about a possible merger. There were official investigations, but, despite a public outcry and rumblings in Parliament, Archer was never charged with anything. Critics suggested that Major's government may have thwarted the inquiry, but there is a more straightforward explanation. In order to get a conviction for insider trading, the prosecutors would have had to prove that Mary Archer, however inadvertently, passed confidential information to her husband. They were unable to do so, and Archer conceded only having made a "grave error" in allowing his name to be associated with the trade.

The Archers' marriage excites almost as much speculation in Britain as the Clintons' marriage does in America. Mary lives in Grantchester, while Jeffrey stays in London for most of the week. The libel case aside, Archer has been linked with two mistresses, one of whom reportedly referred to him as "Wonder Boy," for his sexual prowess. Through it all, his wife has remained with him, inspiring the same mixture of pity, admiration, and anger that Hillary Rodham Clinton does. On the night that "The Accused" opened at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, in the West End, Mary and the couple's two sons, William and James, stood in the foyer greeting the invited guests. Mary, her hair cropped short, was dressed up for the occasion, her pearl necklace and earrings glowing.

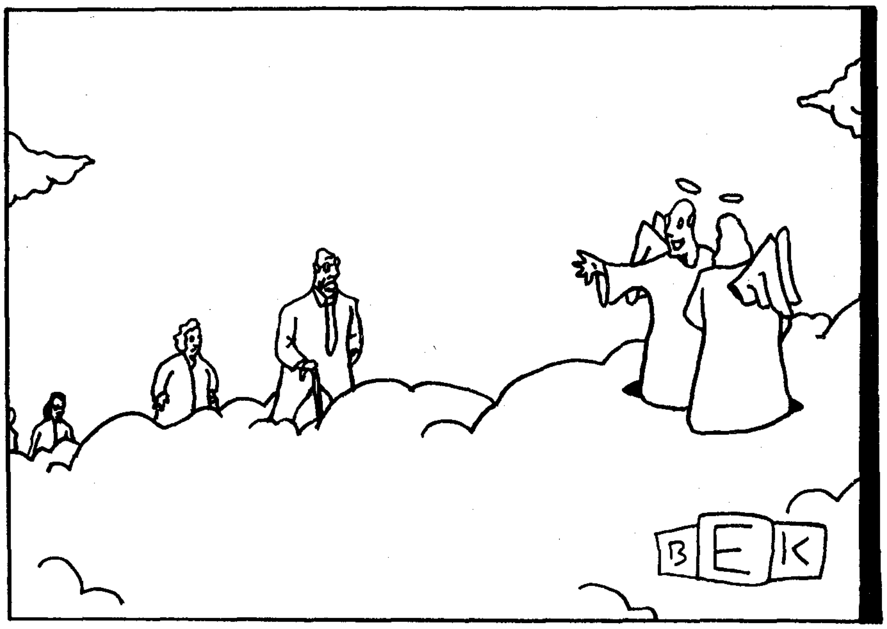
The audience included many figures from Archer's past: former Cabinet ministers, journalists, television personalities, actors, and sportsmen. It was a decent crowd, but Thatcher and Major weren't there, nor were many members of the current Shadow Cabinet. Since Archer has been expelled from the Conservative Party, this was, perhaps, not surprising, but the presence of so many old Thatcherites—John Wakeham, Norman Fowler, and Peter Lilley—only made the dearth of younger Tories more conspicuous. And there were about thirty empty seats in the stalls. Archer had told me that, of all the people he knew, only three had deserted him after his arrest, but John Bryant, his old friend, had a different story to tell. He said that many of Archer's political friends had "melted away like the snow."

The play was less successful in London than it had been in Guildford. Archer's thespian shortcomings were more apparent in a large theatre, and the audience was less receptive to the stilted plot. After the curtain fell, the applause was merely polite. At the stage door, a small crowd of reporters gathered to see the Archers emerge. One of them asked Jeffrey if he had enjoyed himself. "I don't know if anybody enjoys himself on the first night, but the audience was wonderful," he insisted. Mary Archer was standing quietly nearby. I asked her what she thought of her husband's performance. "I think he was very good," she replied. "I'm very impressed." When I asked whether she had seen her husband act before, she said with a smile, "Many times. I think that would be the fairest remark."

The reviews that appeared the following morning were somewhat less positive than Lady Archer's. Michael Coveney, in the *Daily Mail:* "Watching Jeffrey perform is like watching a talking clock trying vainly to speak." Nicholas de Jongh, in the *Evening Standard:* "To call Archer wooden is an insult to furniture." Charles Spencer, in the *Daily Telegraph:* "His writing has all the lightness of the suet pudding they used to serve at my prep school."

Tony Blair's election as Prime Minister, in May of 1997, might have marked the end of Archer's political ambitions. Britain seemed set for a lengthy period of Labour rule, with no apparent role for an aging peer whose party had suffered its most humiliating defeat since 1906. Archer, ever the optimist, had other ideas. He seized on Blair's promise to introduce an elected mayor of London and began pushing aggressively for the job. He hired a campaign staff and set up an organization called the Greater London Forum, which was dedicated to issues of interest to Londoners. He chose Rudolph Giuliani as his role model, and spent a week in September of 1997 following the Mayor around New York. He returned to London with promises to clamp down on graffiti and hold regular town-hall meetings.

The mayoral election was, arguably, the Labour government's most radical political innovation, but it turned into a headache for Blair as the London Labour Party split into rival factions. Few gave the Conservative Party much chance of victory, but a strong Tory candidate could have added to Blair's problems. Archer, despite his enthusiasm, wasn't the man



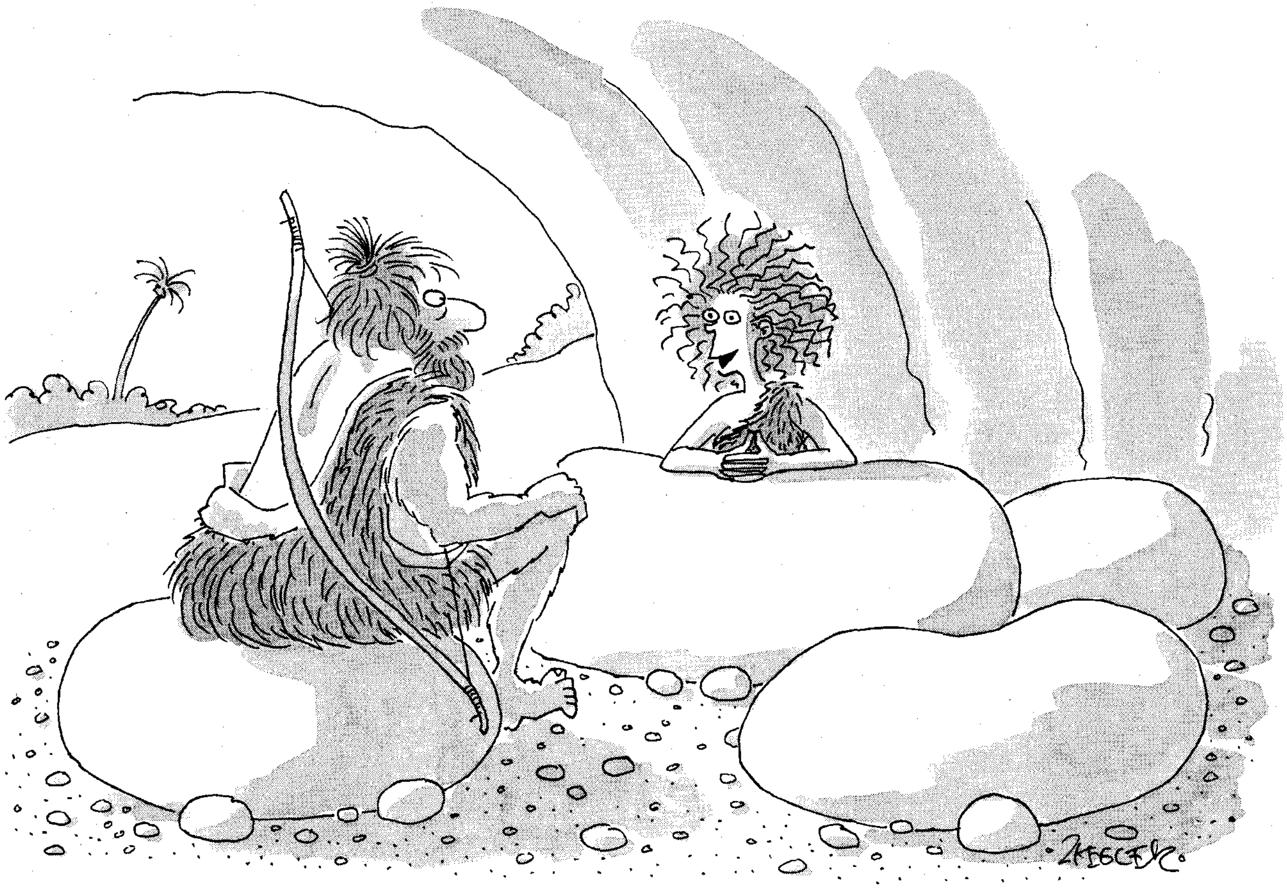
"Hey, great death!"

for the job. It is remarkable, in retrospect, that he—and the Conservative Party leadership—thought he could survive a lengthy and high-profile election campaign without having to answer some questions. Any Londoner who wanted to find out about Archer's record had only to pick up a copy of "Jeffrey Archer: Stranger Than Fiction," the biography by Michael Crick, which describes its subject as "the most dishonest politician in post-war British history." I invited Crick to lunch at the Gay Hussar, a Soho restaurant frequented by politicians and journalists, and he turned out to be an impish, fair-haired fellow of about forty, bursting with energy, and wearing a woolly scarf that made him look like an overgrown schoolboy. He said that he had been inspired by Robert Caro's monumental biography of Lyndon B. Johnson, and the influence is evident: Crick's book, which was published in 1995, is a similar model of arduous research and embarrassing revelation. It was Crick who discovered the facts about Archer's father, the International Federation of Physical Culture, and a good deal more besides. (Archer claimed last week that Crick's book is "riddled with inaccuracies," but when asked to detail them he refused.)

"I was much more positive about Archer in the first edition," Crick told me. "Then I wasn't sure about him. Now I just think he's a crook." That hasn't been proved, but the evidence Crick presents is interesting, to say the least. In the late sixties, when Archer was a professional fund-raiser, he was accused of exaggerating his expense claims from one of his clients, the United Nations Association, and he reportedly agreed to repay some money. In the mid-seventies, he flew to Toronto to give evidence at an inquiry into Aquablast, the company he had invested in so disastrously. While in Canada, he was detained after walking out of a department store with three suits over his arm. He claimed that he hadn't realized he had left the store, and was released without being charged.

Crick is not the sort of reporter who believes in journalistic neutrality: when Archer announced his intention to run for mayor of London, he was so outraged that he sent a letter to William Hague, Major's successor as Tory leader, warning him that more damaging material was likely to emerge during the campaign. Crick offered to go into some of the unpublished allegations against Archer in a private meeting with Hague, but Hague didn't take him up on the offer, and in October of 1999 Archer was selected as the Conservatives' candidate. Shortly after that, Crick called Ted Francis, a sixty-seven-year-old television producer, and arranged to meet him for lunch at a pub near Francis's home in Surrey.

Francis, a longtime acquaintance of Archer's, had played a role in the libel case against the *Daily Star*. In early 1987, before the trial began, Francis had written letters to Archer's lawyers claiming that he had had dinner with Archer at a restaurant in Chelsea on September 9, 1986, thereby providing the novelist with an alibi for a night on which it had been alleged, by the *Daily Star's* lawyers, that he had been with Monica Coghlan. (The



"A pretty rock is always nice at Valentine's Day. Or perhaps another wheel? Or—gosh—what woman doesn't enjoy a lovely bit of fire?"

paper was initially uncertain whether Archer and Coghlan had been together on September 8th or September 9th. Archer provided alibis for both nights.) After Archer's legal triumph, Francis maintained a public silence. But in 1998 he told Crick a sensational story: He and Archer had not had dinner that night in Chelsea; he had said they did only because Archer had asked him to. And shortly afterward Archer gave him an investment of twelve thousand pounds for a proposed television series. When Crick met Francis, they discussed how Francis could go public with this tale. A stumbling block, according to Crick, was that Francis wanted two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Paying for stories is a common practice in parts of Fleet Street, but Crick told me he doubted that any newspaper would hand over so much for a story that could be difficult to prove. As Crick was leaving, Francis said he was thinking of going to see Max Clifford, a publicity agent who had good contacts at the tabloids. "I told him to stick with me," Crick recalled. "But he didn't." Clifford introduced Francis to the *News of the World*, which was happy to exact retribution from Archer.

Vengeance came in the form of a front-page article, on November 21, 1999, in which Francis described his 1987 statement as "a lie that Jeffrey and I cooked up together." The story didn't prove that Archer had lied when he denied being with Coghlan, but it did suggest that he had gone to great efforts to provide himself with a phony cover story. Once again, Archer was forced to resign, this time from the mayoral race, before an issue of the *News of the World* hit the streets. Scotland Yard announced the following day that it was opening a criminal inquiry. The Conservative Party launched its own internal investigation, which resulted in Archer's expulsion from the Party for five years. "This is the end of politics for Jeffrey Archer," Hague declared. "He has let the Conservative Party down badly."

Francis received about eighteen thousand pounds for his story. (Max Clifford claims that Crick's assertion that Francis hoped for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds is "a load of rubbish." He says that Francis, a Labour supporter, wasn't in it for the money.) Francis's involvement in Archer's demise didn't end there. Last October, when Archer appeared at Bow Street Magistrates Court, Francis found himself beside him in the dock; he, too, had been charged with perverting the course of justice.

Archer and Francis made their formal pleas at the Old Bailey just before Christmas. Court One was bigger and busier than its replica in "The Accused." The judge's bench and the dock were raised high above the courtroom floor, facing each other. Between them was a long table, packed with files and evidence. On one side, the rival barristers gathered in their white wigs and gowns. The jury box and the press bench were on the other side. I sat beside Michael Crick, who was collecting material for the next edition of Archer's biography. ("Chapter 32—The Prison Years," he had joked to me, at the Gay Hussar.)

Archer and Francis didn't look at each other as they climbed into the dock. Judge Michael Hyam, the Recorder of London, one of England's senior judges, ambled onto the bench, his robes flapping about him. He was an ancient figure, with white hair, pasty skin, and fat fingers. His manner was that of a man who has presided over more cases than he cares to remember, and who would, all things considered, rather be tending his garden.

After Archer and Francis had confirmed their names, the six charges against them were read. The legal jargon was so convoluted that the clerk got lost several times. Archer, his chest jutting out defiantly, answered "Not guilty" five times in a firm voice. Francis, his voice softer, also answered "Not guilty" to the single perjury charge against him. After the pleas had been entered, the counsels for Archer and Francis agreed to a trial date of May 14th.

When the trial starts, it will be difficult for Archer's lawyers to repeat their strategy in the libel case. The charges against Archer are narrowly drawn, and none of them relate directly to whether he and Coghlan had sex. The key witnesses for the prosecution are likely to be Francis and Angela Peppiatt, Archer's former secretary, who allegedly made some changes to his appointment diary at his request. Archer has already admitted asking Francis to cover for him; there doesn't seem to be much of a role for his most potent weapon, his wife; and the opposition is tougher than it was in 1987. Then he was facing a prostitute and a tabloid of similarly dubious reputation. This time, he is confronted by two of his own former associates, and by the Scotland Yard detective superintendent who successfully investigated another Tory politician, Jonathan Aitken, for similar charges. (Aitken went to jail.)

Judge Hyam granted the defendants bail. The proceeding was over in less than twenty minutes. Archer smiled at the guard in the dock and left the courtroom. He and Francis still hadn't looked at each other. "There goes Kane and Abel," a bystander said in a thick Scottish accent as Archer passed by with his solicitor. Archer ignored the comment. He was busy comparing the layout of the real courtroom with the stage set. "The lines are different," I heard him say. Outside, a gaggle of Fleet Street photographers had assembled. As Archer reached the door, a policewoman guided him out, keeping the press at bay. "Very kind," he said before climbing into the rear seat of his chauffeur-driven BMW and speeding off. A few minutes later, Francis came out looking nervous and hailed a black cab. As he clambered into the back, the photographers swarmed around him, holding the door open so they could get a better picture.

I stopped another black cab and asked the driver to take me to the Haymarket. Along the way, I thought about something Max Hastings, the editor of the *Evening Standard*, had said to me about Archer: "I just don't think he understands the concepts of right and wrong, of truth and fantasy. That might be the basis of his defense. He'll stand up and say he didn't realize he'd done anything wrong. It might even work. I wouldn't say it's more than fifty-fifty on him going inside." Even if Archer is convicted, it may not be the last that's heard of him. He could well write a novel in jail, for example. But he is only five years from retirement age, and, despite his tireless self-promotion, there are signs that the British public may have had its fill of him. On reaching the Theatre Royal, I went to the box office and asked if there were any tickets for that night's show. "Seats available at all prices," the woman behind the counter replied. A few weeks later, "The Accused" closed. ♦

FICTION

MY WIDOW

BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE

CAT PERSON

My widow likes cats. No one knows exactly how many cats inhabit the big solid old redwood house I left her, but after several generations of inbreeding and depositing fecal matter in select corners and in an ever-growing mound on the mantelpiece their numbers must reach into the thirties, perhaps even the forties. There are cats draped like bunting over every horizontal surface in the house, and when they mew in concert for their cat chow and their tins of mashed fish heads, the noise is enough to wake the dead, if you'll pardon the expression. She sleeps with these cats, my widow does, or at least as many of them as the antique bed, with its questionable sheets and cat-greased quilt, can accommodate, and all night and into the burgeoning sun-dappled hours of the early morning there is a ceaseless movement of limb and tongue and the lazy twitching of feline tails. In addition to the cats, my widow once had a pair of vocal and energetic little dogs, of a breed whose name I could never remember, but both have long since run off or been crushed to marrow out on the busy street that winds up from the village and past the rear gate of the house. She had a ferret, too, for a while, though ferrets are illegal in the state of California. It didn't last long. After throttling and partially dismembering a litter of week-old kittens, the animal secreted itself in the crawl space under the house, where it took sick and died. Even now, its mummified corpse subsides gradually into the immemorial dust beneath the floorboards of the kitchen, just under the place where the refrigerator rests, going quietly about its work.

One afternoon, a day or two after the first rain of the winter has converted the dry creek bed out back into a sluice of braided, sepia-colored ripples and long, trailing ropes of eucalyptus bark, my widow is startled by a persistent thumping from the far end of the house. She is in the kitchen, peering into a steaming pot of chicken-vegetable soup—the only thing she ingests these days, aside from the odd slab of indifferently grilled flank steak and coffee so acidic it's taken the glaze off the ceramic cup our son made for her when he was in the sixth grade. The doorbell, which in my day chimed a carillon from Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," is long since defunct, and so my widow takes a while to register the notion that someone is knocking at the front door. The front door, is, after all, a good sixty paces from the kitchen, out the kitchen door and down the long L-shaped hall that leads to the entryway and the grand room beyond it, now a refuge for cats. Still, that is unmistakably the sound of knocking, and you can see the alertness come into her eyes—it could be the postman, she's thinking, who just the other day (or was it the other week?) brought her a letter from our son, who lives and works in Calcutta, dispensing corn-meal mush and clean bandages to the mendicants there. "I'm coming!" my widow calls in her creaking, octave-challenged voice, and she sets down the stirring spoon amidst the debris of what was once the kitchen counter, wipes her hands on her flannel nightgown, and moves slowly but resolutely down the hall to answer the door.

Standing on the brick doorstep, plainly visible through the ancient flowing glass of the front door, is a young woman in shorts, leggings, and some sort of athletic jersey, with stringy black hair, terrible posture, and what appears to be a fur muff tucked under one arm. As my widow gets closer and the indefinite becomes concrete, she sees that the young woman's eyes are heavily made up, and that the muff has become a kitten of indeterminate breed—black, with a white chest and two white socks. Curious, and pursing her lips in the way she used to when she was a young woman herself, my widow swings open the door and stands there blinking and mute, awaiting an explanation.

"Oh, hi," the young woman says, squeezing the words through an automatic smile. "Sorry to disturb you, but I was wondering . . ." Unaccountably, the young woman trails off, and my widow, whose hearing was compromised by the Velvet Underground and Nico during a period of exuberance in the last century, watches her lips for movement. The young woman studies my widow's face momentarily, then decides to change tack. "I'm your neighbor, Megan Capaldi," she says. "Remember me? From the school-lunch drive last year?"

My widow, wearing an old flannel shirt over the faded flannel nightgown, does not, in fact, remember her. She remains noncommittal. Behind her, from the depths of the house, a faint mewling arises.

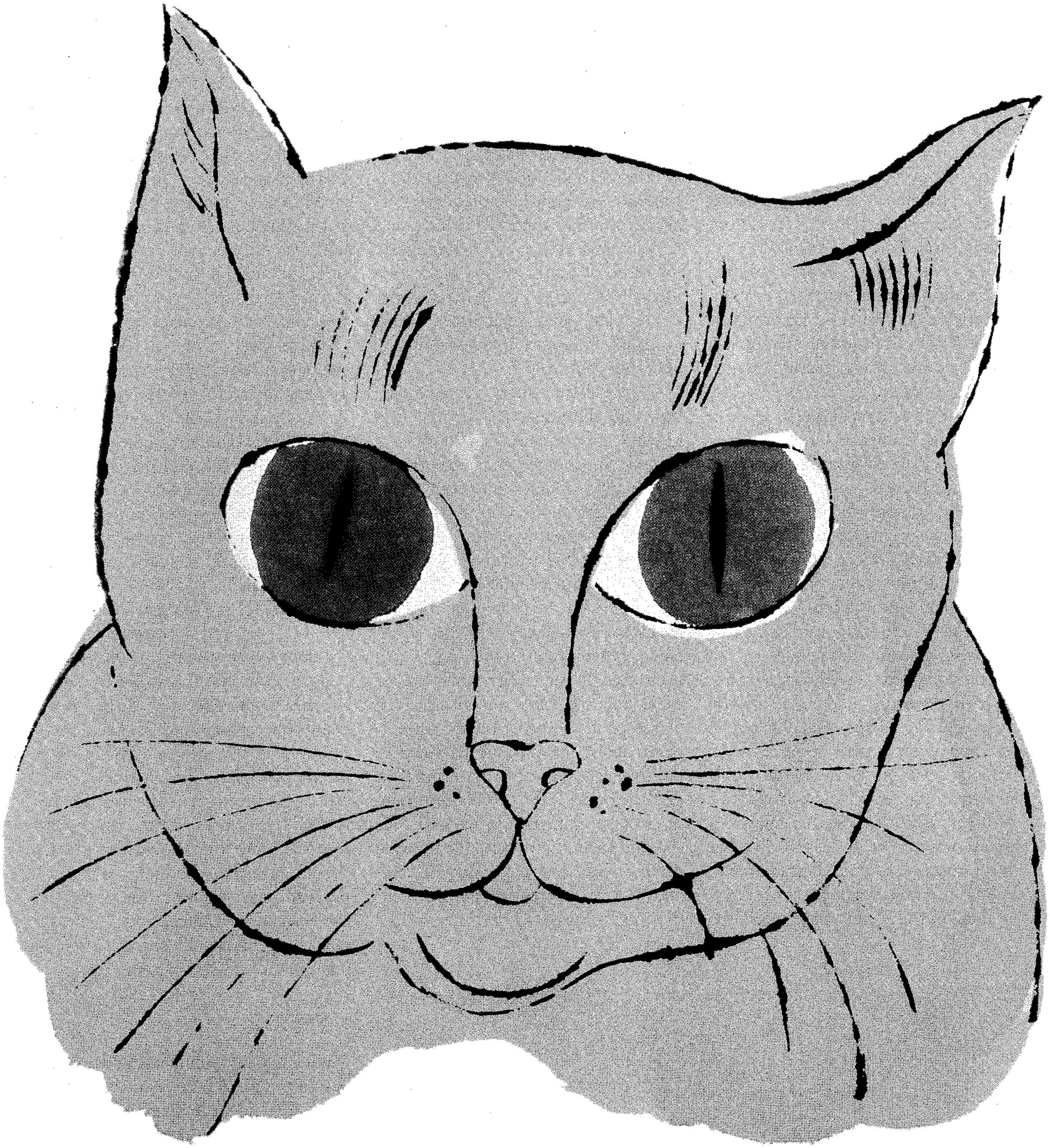
"I heard that you were a real cat person, and I just thought—well, my daughter April's cat had kittens, and we're looking for good homes for them, with people who really care, and this one—we call her Sniggers—is the last one left."

My widow is smiling, her face transformed into a girl's, the striations over her lip pulling back to reveal a shining and perfect set of old lady's teeth—the originals, beautifully preserved. "Yes," she says, "yes," before the question has been asked, already reaching out for the kitten with her regal old hands. She holds it to her a moment, then looks up myopically into the young woman's face. "Thanks for thinking of me," she says.

THE ROOF

The roof, made of a composite material guaranteed for life, leaks. My widow is in the bedroom, in bed, crocheting neat four-inch granny squares against some larger need, while listening to the murmur of the TV across the room and the crashing impact of yet an-

ANDY WARHOL, "UNTITLED" (1954)/© 2001 ANDY WARHOL FOUNDATION/ARS, NY



other storm above her, when the dripping begins. The cats are the first to notice it. One of them, a huge, bloated, square-headed tom with fur like roadkill, shifts position to avoid the cold stinging drops, inadvertently knocking two lesser cats off the west slope of the bed. A jockeying for space ensues, the cats crowding my widow's crocheting wrists and elbows and leaving a vacant spot at the foot of the bed. Even then, she thinks nothing of it. A voice emanating from the TV cries out, *They're coming—they're coming through the walls!,* followed by the usual cacophony of screams, disjointed music, and masticatory sounds. The rain beats at the windows.

A long slow hour hisses by. Her feet are cold. When she rubs them together, she discovers that they are also wet. Her first thought is of the cats—have they been up to their tricks again? But no, there is a distinct patter now, as of water falling from a height, and she reaches out her hand to confront the mystery. There follows a determined shuffle through the darkened arena of the house, a close but random inspection of the ceilings with a flashlight (which itself takes half an hour to find), and then an all-night vigil over the stewpot that is gradually filling itself at the foot of the bed. For a while, she resumes her crocheting, but the steady mesmeric drip of the intruding rain idles her fingers and sweeps her off into a reverie of the past. She's revisiting other roofs—

the attic nook of her girlhood room, the splootching nightmare of her student apartment with the dirty sit-water drooling down the wall into the pan as she heated brown rice and vegetables over the stove, the collapse of the ceiling in our first house after a pipe burst while we were away in Europe—and then she's in Europe herself, in the rain on the Grand Canal, with me, her first and most significant husband, and before long the stewpot is overflowing, and she's so far away she might as well exist in another dimension.

The roofer, whose name emerged from the morass of the Yellow Pages, arrives some days later, during a period of tumultuous weather, and stands banging on the front door while rain drips from the corroded copper gutters (which, incidentally, are also guaranteed for life). My widow is ready for him. She's been up early each day for the past week, exchanging her nightgown for a pair of jeans and a print blouse, over which she wears an old black cardigan decorated with prancing blue reindeer, which she once gave me for Christmas. She's combed out her hair and put on a dab of lipstick. Like Megan Capaldi before him, the roofer pounds at the redwood frame of the front door until my widow appears in the vestibule. She fumbles a moment with the glasses that hang from a cord around her neck, and then her face assumes a look of bewilderment: Who is this infant banging at the door?

"Hello!" the roofer calls, rattling the doorknob impatiently as my widow stands there before him on the inside of the glass panel, looking confused. "It's me—the roofer?" He's shouting now: "You said you had a leak?"

The roofer's name is Vargas D'Onofrio, and the minute he pronounces it it's already slipped her mind. He has quick, nervous eyes, and his face is sunk into a full beard of tightly wound black hairs threaded with gray. He's in his early forties, actually, but anyone under seventy looks like a newborn to my widow, and understandably so.

"You're all wet," she observes, leading him into the house and up the slow heaving stairs to reveal the location of the leak. She wonders if she should offer to bake him cookies and maybe fix a pouch of that hot chocolate that only needs microwaved water to complete it, and she sees the two of them sitting down at the kitchen table for a nice chat after he's fixed the roof—but does she have any hot chocolate? Or nuts, shortening, brown sugar? How long has it been since she remembered to buy flour, even? She had a five-pound sack of it in the pantry—she distinctly remembers that—but then wasn't that the flour the weevils got into? She's seeing little black bugs, barely the size of three grains of pepper cobbled together, and then she understands that she doesn't want to chat with this man—or with anybody else, for that matter. She just wants the roof repaired so she can go back to the quiet seep of her old lady's life.

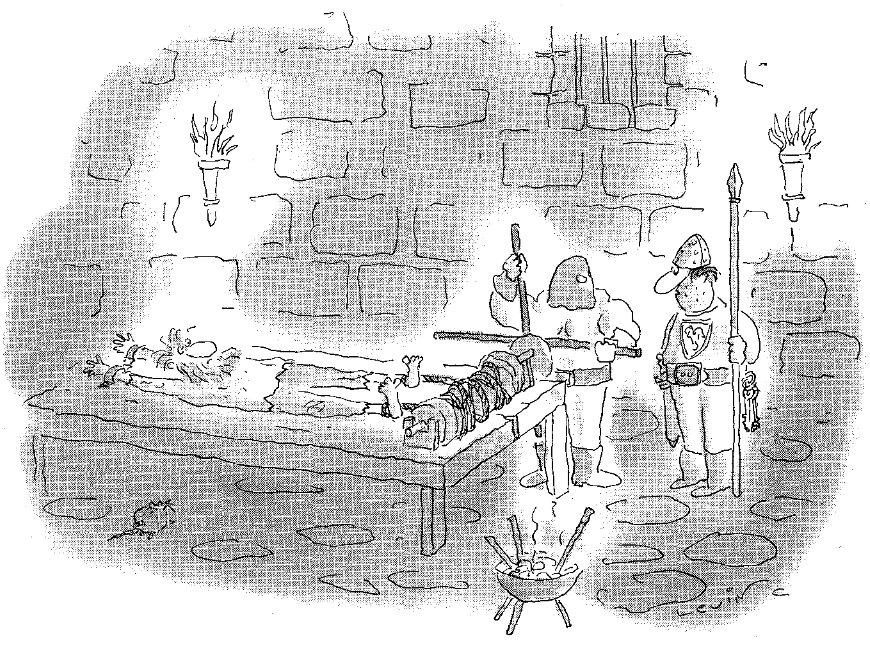
"Rotten weather," the roofer breathes, thumping up the stairs in his work boots and trundling on down the upper hallway to the master bedroom, scattering cats as he goes.

My widow has given up on the stewpot and has been sleeping downstairs, in what was once our son's room. As a result, the antique bed is now soaked through to the springs and oozing water the color of tobacco juice.

"I can patch it," the roofer says, after stepping out onto the sleeping porch and assaying the roof from the outside, "but you really should have the whole thing replaced once summer comes—and I can do that for you, too, and give you a good price. Best price in town, in fact." The roofer produces a wide bearded closer's grin that is utterly lost on my widow.

"But that roof," she says, "was guaranteed for life."

The roofer just shrugs. "Aren't they all?" he sighs, and disappears through the door to the sleeping porch. As she pulls the door shut, my widow can smell the keen working scent of the rain loosening the earth around the overgrown flower beds, and the vaguely fishy odor of wet pavement. The air is alive. She can see her breath in it. She watches the roofer's legs ride up past the window as he hoists himself up the ladder and into the pall of the rain. And then, as she settles into the armchair in the bedroom, she hears him up there, aloft, his heavy tread, the pounding of nails, and through it all comes a smell of burning tar.



"Righty-tighty, lefty-loosey."

SHOPPING

In her day, my widow was a champion shopper. She'd been a student of anthropology in her undergraduate years, and she always maintained that a woman's job—her need, calling, and compulsion—was to accumulate things against the hard times to come. Never mind that we didn't experience any hard times—aside from maybe having to pinch a bit in grad school or maxing out our credit cards when we were travelling in Japan back in the eighties—my widow was ready for anything. She shopped with a passion matched by few women of her generation. Her collections of antique jewelry, glassware, china figurines, and the like would, I think, be truly valuable, if she could ever find them in the cluttered caverns and dark byways of the house and basement, and the fine old Craftsman-era couches and chairs strewn through the main rooms are museum pieces, or would be, if the cats hadn't got to them. Even now, despite the fact that she's become increasingly withdrawn and more than a bit impatient with the fuss and hurry of the world, my widow can still get out and shop with the best of them.

On a day freshened by a hard cold breeze off the ocean, she awakens in my son's narrow bed to a welter of cats and a firm sense of purpose. Her sister, Inge, ten years her junior and unmarried, is driving up from Ventura to take her shopping at the mall for the pre-Christmas sales, and she is galvanized into action. Up and out of bed at first light, the crusted pot set atop the crusted burner, and coffee brewing, she slips into a nice skirt and blouse (after a prolonged search through the closet in the master bedroom, where the mattress, unfortunately, continues to ooze a brownish fluid), pulls her hair back in a bun, and sits down to a breakfast of defrosted wheat bread, rancid cream cheese, and jam so old it's become a culture medium. In my time, there were two newspapers to chew through and the morning news on the radio, but my widow never bothered herself much with the mechanics of receiving and paying bills (the envelope, the check, the stamp), and the newspapers have been discontinued. As for the radio, my widow prefers silence. She is thinking nothing, staring into space and slowly rotating the coffee cup in her hands, when there is a sharp rap at the kitchen door and Inge's face appears, framed there in the glass panel.

Later, hours later, after lunch at the Thai Palace, after Pick 'n Save, Costco, Ruby's Thrift Shoppe, and the Bargain Basement, my widow appears in the midst of a crush of shoppers at Macy's. She doesn't like department stores, never has—no bargains to be had, or not usually—but her sister is looking at some tableware for one of their grandnieces, and my widow finds herself, unaccountably, in the linen department, surrounded by women poking through sheets and pillowcases and little things for the bathroom. There will be a white sale in January, she knows that as well as she knows there will be valentines for Valentine's Day and lilies for Easter, and since the maid died ten years back she hasn't had much need of linens—nobody to change the beds, really—but she can't help herself. The patterns are so unique, the fabric so fresh and appealing in its neat plastic packaging. Voices leap out around her. Christmas music settles on the air. My widow looks around for a salesperson.

SECOND HUSBAND

His name is—*was*—Roland Secourt. He was one of those types who never really strain themselves with such trivialities as earning a living during their younger years, and he wound up being a pretty impressive old man, replete with teeth, hair, and the ability to walk unaided from the car to the house. I remember him only slightly—he used to give piano lessons to our son a thousand years ago, and I think he managed a parking lot or something like that. At any rate, five years after I bowed out he began showing up at the front door with one excuse or another—he was driving past and saw the gate was open; he'd picked up six cases of cranberry juice at a sale and didn't know what to do with it all; he was just wondering if my widow might want to go down to the village for maybe a cocktail and dinner—and before long, my widow, who'd succumbed to the emptiness that afflicts us all, took him in.

She never loved him, though. He was a man, a presence in a deteriorating house full of cats, my shadowy simulacrum. What did he bring with him? Three cardboard boxes full of out-of-date shoes, belt buckles, underwear, a trophy he'd once won in a piano competition. Nine months into the marriage he sucked up his afflatus to crack the holy living hell out of a golf ball on the fourth tee at La Cumbre Country Club (he was golf-fixated, another strike against him), felt a stab under his arm, as if someone had inserted one of those gleaming biopsy needles between his ribs, and fell face forward onto the turf, dead, without displacing the ball from the tee.

That was a long time ago. My widow didn't have him around long enough to

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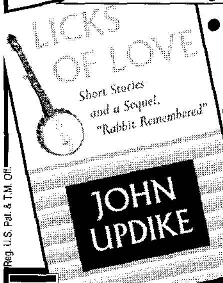

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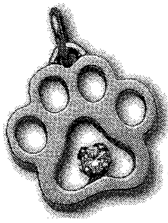

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really get used to him in the way she was used to the walls and the furniture and the cats, so his death, though a painful reminder of what awaits us all, wasn't the major sort of dislocation it might have been. He was there, and then he was gone. I have no problem with that.

HER PURSE

Her purse was always a bone of contention between us—or her *purses*, actually. She seemed to have a limitless number of them, one at least for every imaginable occasion, from dining at the White House to hunting boar in Kentucky, and all of them stuffed full of ticket stubs, charge-card receipts, wadded-up tissues, cat collars, gum wrappers, glasses with broken frames, makeup in various states of desiccation, crushed fortune cookies, fragments of our son's elementary-school report cards, dice, baby teeth, empty Tic Tac cases, keychains, cans of Mace, and a fine detritus of crumbs, dandruff, sloughed skin, and chips of nail polish. Only one of these, however, contained her checkbook and wallet. That was the magical one, the essential one, the one she spent a minimum of half an hour looking for every time we left the house, especially when we were on our way to the airport or the theatre or a dinner date with A-type personalities like myself who'd specified *8 P.M., sharp*.

Not that I'm complaining. My widow lived a placid, unhurried existence, no slave to mere schedules, as so many of us were. She radiated calm in a crisis. When things went especially badly—during the '05 earthquake, for instance—she would fix herself a nice meal, some stir-fry or chicken-vegetable soup, and take a nap in order to put things in their proper perspective. And so what if the movie started at 7:45 and we arrived at 8:30? It was all the more interesting for having to piece together what must have transpired with this particular set of characters while we were looking for purses, parking the car, and sprinting hand in hand down the crowded street. The world could wait. What was the hurry?

At any rate, it is that very same totemic purse that turns up missing after her shopping trip. She and her sister arrive home in a blizzard of packages, and, after sorting them out in the driveway and making three trips from car to house, they part just as dusk is pushing the birds into the trees and thickening the shadows in the fronds of the tree ferns I planted thirty years ago. Inge won't be staying for dinner, nor will she be spending the night. She is eager to get home to her own house, where a pot of chicken-vegetable soup and her own contingent of cats await her. "Well," she says, casting a quick eye over the heap of packages on the table, "I'm off," and the door closes on silence.

Days pass. My widow goes through her daily routine without a thought of her purse, until, with the cat food running low, she prepares for a trip to the market in the ancient, battered, *hennarot* BMW M3 that used to be my pride and joy, and discovers that none of the purses she is able to locate contain her wallet, her keys, her glasses (without which she can't even see the car, let alone drive it). While the cats gather around her, voicing their complaints, she attempts to retrace her steps of the past few days and concludes finally that she must have left the purse in her sister's car. Certainly, that's where it is. Of course it is. Unless she left it on the counter at Ruby's or the Bargain Basement or even Macy's. But if she had, they would have called, wouldn't they?

She tries her sister, but Inge isn't much for answering the phone these days, a quirk of her advancing years. Why bother? That's what she thinks. Who is there she wants to hear from? At her age, is there any news that can't wait? Any news that could even vaguely be construed as good? My widow is nothing if not persistent, however, and on the twelfth ring Inge picks up the phone. "Hello?" she rasps in a voice that was never especially melodious but is now just a deflated ruin. My widow informs her of the problem, accepts a scolding that goes on for at least five minutes and incorporates a dozen ancient grievances, and then she waits on the line for another fifteen minutes while Inge hobbles out to the garage to check the car. *Click, click*, she's back on the line and she has bad news for my widow: the purse is not there. Is she sure? Yes, yes, she's sure.

"Don't overdo it, Ira. This isn't even our car."

She's no idiot. She still has two eyes in her head, doesn't she?

For the next two hours, my widow searches for the phone book. Her intention is to look up the phone numbers of the stores they visited, and the Thai Palace, too—she's concerned, and the cats are hungry. But the phone book is elusive. After evicting a dozen cats from the furniture in the main room, digging through the pantry and the closet and discovering any number of things she misplaced years ago, she loses track of what she's looking for, lost in a reverie over an old photo album that turns up in the cabinet under the stove, amidst the pots and pans. She sits at the table, a crescent of yellow lamplight illuminating her features, and studies the hard evidence of the way things were. There are pictures of the two of us, smiling into the camera against various exotic backdrops, against Christmas trees and birthday cakes, minarets and mountains, a succession of years flipping by, our son, his dog, the first cat. Her heart—my widow's heart—is bursting. It's gone, everything is gone, and what's the sense of living, what's it all about? The girlhood in Buffalo, the college years, romance and love and hope and the prospect of the future—what was the sense in it? Where has it gone? The pictures cry out to her. They scream from the page. They poke her and prod her until she's got no breath left in her body. And just then, when the whole world seems to be closing down, the phone rings.

BOB SMITH, A.K.A. SMYTHE ROBERTS, ROBERT P. SMITHEE, CLAUDIO NORIEGA, AND JACK FROUNCE

"Hello?" my widow answers, her voice like the clicking of the tumblers in an old lock.

"Mrs. B.?" a man's voice inquires.

My widow is cautious but polite, a woman who has given her trust, time and again, and been rewarded, for the most part, with kindness and generosity in return. But she hates telephone solicitors, especially those boiler-room types who prey on the elderly—the TV news has been full of that sort of thing lately, and the A.A.R.P. newsletter, too. She hesitates a moment, and then, in a barely audible voice, whispers, "Yes?"

"My name is Bob Smith," the caller returns. "And I've found your purse. Somebody apparently dumped it in a trash bin outside of Macy's—no cash left, of course, but your credit cards are intact, and your license and whatnot. Listen, I was wondering if I might bring it to you—I mean, I could mail it, but who can trust the mail these days, right?"

My widow makes a noise of assent. She doesn't trust the mail, either. Or, actually, she's never really thought about it one way or another. She shuts her eyes and sees the mailman in his gray-blue shorts with the black stripe up the side, his neatly parted hair cut in the old-fashioned way, his smile, and the way his eyes seem to register everything about everybody on his route, as if he took it personally, as if he were policing the streets out front and back of her house and stuffing mailboxes at the same time. Maybe she does trust the mail. Maybe she does.

Bob Smith says, "The mail'd take three days, and I'd have to find a box for the thing—"

My widow says what Bob Smith has been hoping she'll say: "Oh, you don't have to go to all that bother. Honestly, I'd come to you, but without my driving glasses—they're in the purse, you see, and I do have another pair, several pairs, but I can't seem to, I can't—"

"That's all right," he croons, his voice flowing like sugar-water into a child's cup. "I'm just glad to help out. Now, is this address on your driver's license still current?"

My widow is waiting at the door for him when he steps through the front gate, a pair of legs like chopsticks in motion, his hair a dyed fluff of nothing combed straight up on his head as if he were one of those long-pants comedians of her father's era, a face gouged with wrinkles and a smile that makes his eyes all but disappear into two sinkholes of flesh. He wouldn't have got any farther than the gate if I were around, and I don't care how old I might have been, or how frail—this man is trouble, and my widow doesn't know it. Look out, honey, I want to say. Watch out for this one.

But she's smiling her beautiful smile, the smile that, even after all these years, has the two puckered dimples in it, her face shining and serene, and "Hello,

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hello, Mr. Smith," she's saying, "won't you come in?"

He will. He ducks reflexively on stepping through the door, as if his head would crack the doorframe, a tall man with dangling hands, a grubby white shirt, and a tie that looks as if it had been used to swab out the deep fryer at McDonald's. In his left hand, a plain brown shopping bag, and, as she shuts the door behind him and six or seven cats glance up suspiciously from their perch on the mantel, he holds it out to her. "Here it is," he says, and, sure enough, her purse is inside, soft black leather with a silver clasp and the ponzu-sauce stain etched into the right panel like an abstract design. She fumbles through the purse for her wallet, thinking to offer him a reward, but then she remembers that there's no money in it—hadn't he said on the phone that the money was gone? "I wanted to—" she begins, "I mean, you've been so nice, and I—"

Bob Smith is not listening. He's wandered out into the arena of the grand room, hands clasped behind his back, dodging mounds of discarded magazines, unravelling skeins of yarn, toppled lamps, and a cat-gutted ottoman. He has the look of a prospective buyer, interested but not yet committed. "Pretty old place," he says, taking his time.

My widow, plumped with gratitude, is eager to accommodate him. "Nineteen-oh-nine," she says, working the purse between her hands. "It's the only Prairie-style—"

"The rugs and all," he says, "they must be worth something. And all this pottery and brass stuff—you must have jewelry, too."

"Oh, yes," my widow says, "I've been collecting antique jewelry for, well, since before I was an antique myself," and she appends a little laugh. What a nice man, she's thinking, and how many out there today would return a lady's purse? Or anything, for that matter? They'd stolen the lawn mower right out of the garage, stripped the tires off the car that time she'd broken down in Oxnard. She's feeling giddy, ready to dial Inge the minute he leaves and crow about the purse that's come back to her as if it had wings.

"Your husband here?" Bob Smith asks, picking his way back to her like a man on the pitching deck of a ship. There seems to be something stuck to the bottom of his left shoe.

"My husband?" Another laugh, muted, caught deep in her throat. "He's been gone twenty years now. Twenty-one. Or no, twenty-two."

"Kids?"

"Our son, Philip, lives in Calcutta, India. He's a doctor."

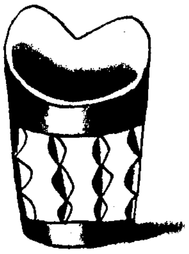
"So there's nobody here but you," Bob Smith says, and that's when my widow feels the first faint stirring of alarm. A cat rises slowly on the periphery of her vision, stretching itself. The sun slants through the windows, irradiating the skeleton of the dead palm in the big pot in the corner. Everything is still. She just nods her head in response to the question and clutches the purse to her, thinking, It's all right, just show him to the door now, and thank him, tell him the reward's coming in the mail, just leave an address. . . .

But Bob Smith isn't ready to leave. In fact, he's hovering over her now, his face as rucked and seamed as an old mailbag, his eyes glittering like something that's been crushed in the street. "So where's the jewelry, then?" he says, and there's nothing of the good Samaritan left in his voice now, no bonhomie, no fellow feeling, or even civility. "Can you even find it in this shit hole? Huh?"

My widow doesn't say a word.

He has a hand on her wrist suddenly, clamped there like a manacle, and he's tugging at her, shouting in her face. "You stupid old bitch! You're going to pay—shit, yes, you're going to pay. Any cash? Huh? Cash? You know what that is?" And then, before she has time to answer, he snakes out his other hand, the right one, and slaps her till she jerks back from the grip of him like an animal caught in the jaws of a trap.

My widow hasn't been slapped in seventy-odd years, not since she got into a fight with her sister over a pan of brownies when their mother stepped out of the kitchen to answer the phone. She's in shock, of course—everything's happened so fast—but she's tough, my widow, as tough at the core as anybody on earth. Nobody slaps her. Nobody comes into her house on false pretenses and—well, you get the picture. And in the next instant her free hand comes up out of the purse with an ancient can of Mace clutched in it, and, because this is a good and fitting universe I'm constructing here, the aerosol spray still works despite an expiration date ten years past, and, before she can think, Bob Smith is writhing on the floor in a riot of cat feces, cursing and rubbing at his eyes. And more: when my widow turns for the door, ready to scurry out onto that brick porch and scream till her dried-up old lungs give out, who should be standing there at the door but Megan Capaldi, screaming herself.



IN HER OWN WORDS

As I say, my widow doesn't get the newspaper, not anymore. But Megan Capaldi brings her two copies the next day, because her picture is on the front page under the caption, "Feisty Octogenarian Thwarts Burglary." There she is, hunched and squinting into the camera, arm in arm with Megan Capaldi, who dialled 911 on her cell phone and escorted my widow to safety while the San Roque Municipal Police handcuffed Bob Smith and secured him in the back of their cruiser. In the photograph, which shows off the front of the house to real advantage, I think—the windows especially, with their intricate design and the wooden frames I scraped, sanded, and painted at least three times in the course of my tenure here—my widow is smiling. So, too, is Megan Capaldi, who wouldn't be bad-looking at all if only she'd stand up straight. Posed there, with the house mushrooming over them in grainy black and white, you can hardly tell them apart.

On page 2, at the end of the article, my widow is given an opportunity to reflect on her ordeal. "It's a shame, is what it is," she is quoted as saying, "the way people like this prey on the elderly—and don't forget the telemarketers, they're just as bad. It didn't use to be this way, before everybody got so suspicious of everybody else, and you didn't have to triple-lock your doors at night, either."

There was more, much more, because the young woman reporter they sent out to the house had been so sympathetic—a cat person herself—but there were space limitations, and the story, while novel, didn't have the sort of grit and horror that the paper's readers had come to expect. Any number of times during the interview, for instance, my widow had begun with the phrase, "When my husband was alive," but none of that made the cut.

NIGHT

It is Christmas, a clear cold night, the sky above the house staggering under the weight of the stars. My widow doesn't know about the stars—or if she does, it's only theoretically. She doesn't leave the house much, except for shopping, of course, and shopping is almost exclusively a daytime activity. At the moment, she is sitting in the grand room, on the cherry-wood couch in front of the fireplace, where the ashes lie heaped, twenty-two years cold. She has been knitting, and the electric-blue needles and the balls of yarn lie in her lap, along with three or four cats. Her head is thrown back, resting on the broad wooden plane of the couch, and she is staring up at the high sloping ceiling above her, oblivious of the sky beyond and the cold pinpoints of light crowding the plane of the ecliptic. She's not thinking about the roof, or the roofer, or rain. She's not thinking about anything.

There is little evidence of the holidays here—a few Christmas cards scattered across the end table, a wreath of artificial pine she draped over one of the light sconces six years ago. She doesn't bother anymore with the hand-crafted elves and angels from Gstaad, the crèche made of mopane wood, or even the colored lights and bangles. All that was peerless in its time, the magic of the season, our son coming down the stairs in his pajamas, year after year, growing taller and warier, the angels tarnished, the pile of gift-wrapped presents growing in proportion, but that time is past. She and Inge had planned to get together and exchange gifts in the afternoon, but neither of them had felt much enthusiasm for it, and, besides, Inge's car wouldn't start. What I'd wanted here was for our son to pull up front in a cab, having flown in all the way from the subcontinent to be with his mother for Christmas—and he'd been planning on it, too, planning to surprise her, but a new and cruelly virulent strain of cholera had swept through the refugee camps, and he couldn't get away.

So she sits there by the ashes of the cold fire, listening to the furtive groans and thumps of the old house. The night deepens, the stars draw back, higher and higher, arching into the backbone of the sky. She is waiting for something she can't name, a beautiful old lady clothed in cats, my widow, just waiting. It is very still. ♦

AUTHOR-TO-WATCH
FROM MACADAM/CAGE PUBLISHING

Joanna Catherine Scott

Born during an air raid over London, raised in Australia, Ms. Scott migrated to the U.S. in 1976 where she received her graduate degree from Duke University.

Current residence: Chapel Hill, North Carolina

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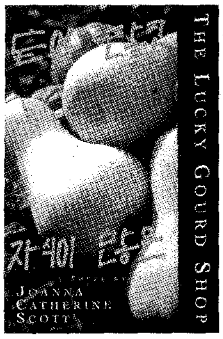

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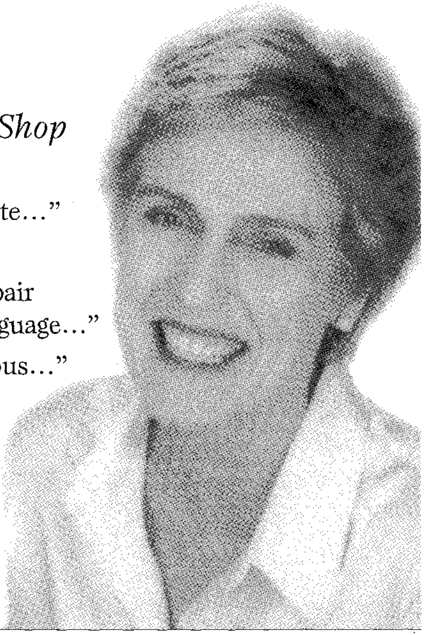


THE CRITICS

THE CURRENT CINEMA

RENAISSANCE MAN

The return of Hannibal Lecter.

BY ANTHONY LANE

Hannibal Lecter doesn't want to eat you. He just wants to pick your brains. This is the reassuring message sent out by "Hannibal," a full-blooded adaptation, scripted by David Mamet and Steven Zaillian, of Thomas Harris's novel. When the book was first delivered, it was called "The Morbidity of the Soul," a resounding title that would have reduced sales by seventy-five per cent. A more accurate description would be "The Snobbery of the Soul," for what drives the good doctor to feast on humans—not his fellow-humans, for he himself barely qualifies—is that he looks down on them like a diner gazing at his plate. "I forget your generation can't read," he once said to Clarice Starling when she was still a trainee with the F.B.I., and the new film finds Hannibal the bookworm, under the assumed name of Dr. Fell, munching his way through the Renaissance. Are we supposed to recall the dry little ditty by Thomas Brown, the seventeenth-century author of "Letters from the Dead to the Living"?

> I do not love thee, Dr Fell.
> The reason why I cannot tell;
> But this I know, and know full well,
> I do not love thee, Dr Fell.

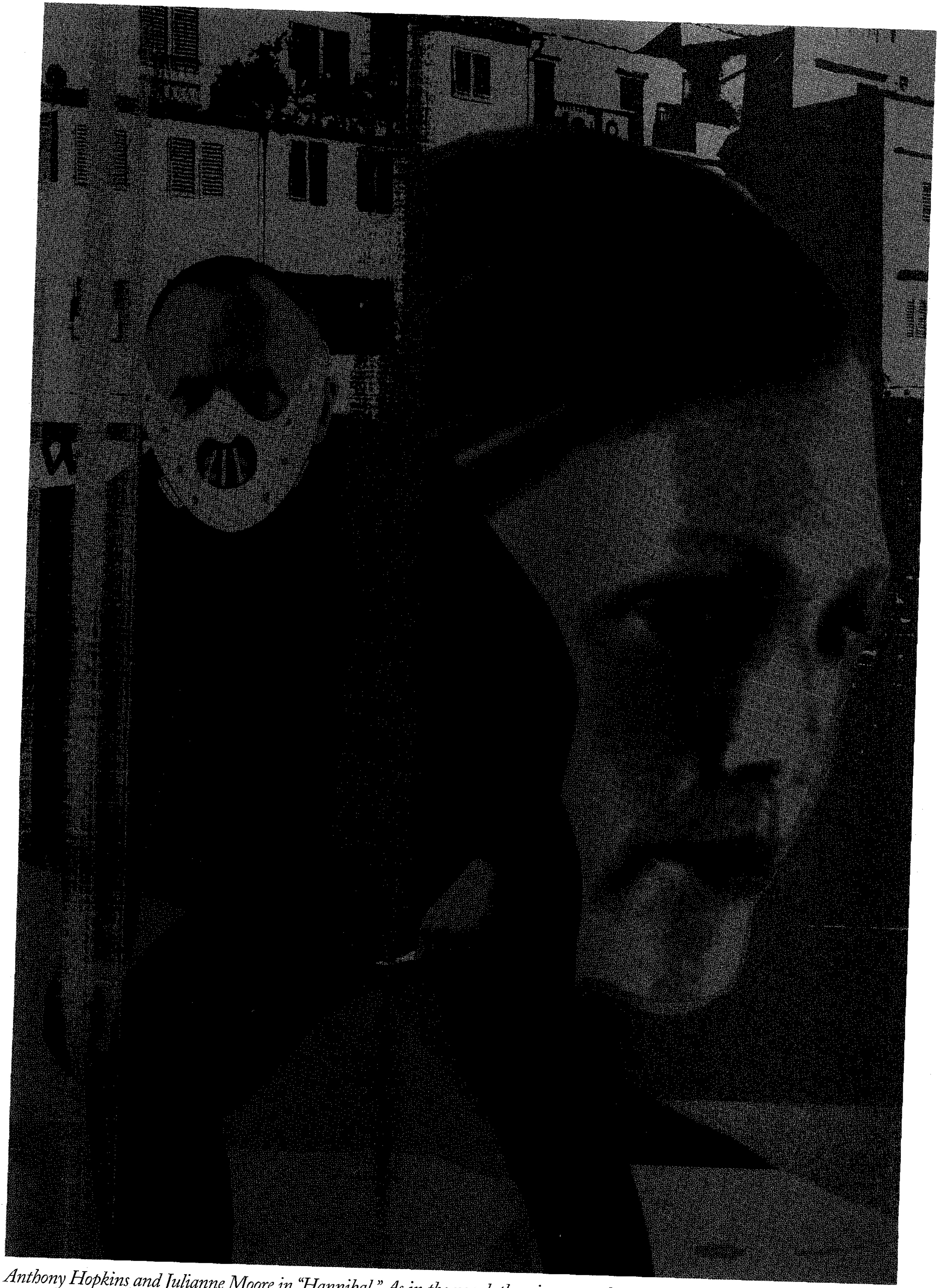
No, indeed. Even in gregarious Italy, this modern Fell looks ominously friendless. Much of the action is set in Florence, where he is applying for a position as the curator of a venerable library, and where every gesture—the licking of an envelope, the downing of an espresso—becomes a minor art. "What I want is a view" was the request of the imprisoned Lecter, in his Baltimore cell; now, exactly ten years after "The Silence of the Lambs," in which he made his escape, the free Lecter has a Forsterian view to die for, or to kill for, and the rooms to go with it. The director is Ridley Scott, and nobody with an eye as readily seduced as his could be expected to forgo the pleasures of plashy fountains and dim, cooling colonnades. But you would get those in a Merchant Ivory film, too; what you would not get is the *campo* of Scott's opening credits, shot in shivering black-and-white instead of the drenched colors that he adores. Nor would you get his flock of unsettled pigeons; seen from high above, they flap and fidget across the square to form, briefly and miraculously, the face of Hannibal Lecter.

In short, Lecter is everywhere. We know this from the pages of "Red Dragon," "The Silence of the Lambs," and, latterly, "Hannibal," throughout which Harris dropped deftly into the historic present to indicate that the doctor, far from being locked in the security of the past tense, is somehow always with us: "Dr. Lecter has six fingers on his left hand," or "A brief silence, always, follows the name in any civilized gathering." Even behind bars, Lecter managed to roam across our minds as if they were open prairies. Hence the many problems of Harris's "Hannibal," in which our hero was set literally at large, finally practicing all that he had preached. Big deal. When evil can do what it wants, the edge is taken off our fear and our sneaky sense of fun.

Here comes Anthony Hopkins, though, returning to the role, and determined afresh that all concerned should have a ball. He ups the camp factor, lightening Lecter's unearthly stillness—look how erect he stands, like a sentry or a statue, in a blade of Italian sunlight—with a series of winks and smiles (the half-second smile that never has time to reach his eyes), plus a peculiar predilection for the word "okey-dokey." This is said with relish, as if Hannibal were a chummy butcher in an Ealing comedy, as he prepares to unzip a man's belly and release the rope of his intestines. Yet I prefer Lecter in more solemn moments: the air of peacefulness, scented with something close to sorrow, that envelops him as he clamps a chloroformed handkerchief to a victim's nose, or the considerate tilt of the head which he gives when, for one reason or another, he is caught and bound, as if pitying those deluded creatures who think they can keep him captive for long—or, even more preposterously, bend his will to their own.

The truth is that Lecter alone prevails; his will is iron, and everyone around him is as breakable as bone. There is Mason Verger—played, somewhere far below his strata of prosthetics and makeup, by a famous actor, uncredited at the start, whose identity I will leave you to guess. Verger suffered at the hands of Lecter but survived, minus the traditional fittings of a face; now he lies, lapped in baronial splendor on the family estate in Maryland, and plots his rococo revenge. The trouble is that you can feel Scott, like Harris before him, cranking up the weird and the wicked until they hit the level of the laughable. The film does not require us to believe, as the book did, that Verger sips cocktails made from the chilled tears of children, but you still get a weary sense that the whole world has been Lecterized—ground down not merely by the burden of his perversions but by his donnish scorn for the ordinary. The F.B.I. is no longer a trustable resource, as it was for Starling in "The Silence of the Lambs," but a haven for misogynists. The Justice Department breeds creeps like Paul Krendler (Ray Liotta), who will shove Starling out of a job if he can't get into her pants. Dr. Lecter, as you can imag-

JOHN RITTER



Anthony Hopkins and Julianne Moore in "Hannibal." As in the novel, there is a sense that the whole world has been Lecterized.

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ine, is keen to meet Mr. Krendler; he has a bone to pick with him.

Then there is Clarice herself; instead of Jodie Foster, who refused a reprise, we have Julianne Moore—at once more rarefied and more subdued, with a pallor that would do credit to the Lady of Shalott. Foster's Starling was a fighter, and Moore's calmer bearing makes her a less plausible product of the poor white South—"tornado bait," in Lecter's delightful phrase. On the other hand, it could be the calmness of shock; you suspect that Starling's heart has been anesthetized not only by a decade with the Feds but by her time apart from Hannibal. "I can't get him out of my mind," she says to Barney (Frankie R. Faison), who once guarded the doctor, and then asks, "What did he have to say about me?" The words could be those of a forsaken lover, and you can't help noticing the flush that fills her drained face when contact is renewed. Clarice's lead is a superior hand cream (this is a movie that swoons more over smells than tastes), faintly perceptible on a letter that Hannibal mails to her in an unwise spasm of sympathy. From F.B.I. headquarters, Starling rings a senior police officer, Rinaldo Pazzi (Giancarlo Giannini), and warns him that Lecter will sniff out any pursuers, but the detective has ambitions of his own, aware that the doctor, like a tiger, is worth more if caught alive. Hannibal gives a lecture: "Avarice and hanging are linked in the medieval imagination," he declares, with the hapless Pazzi standing nearby. Try saying that name aloud.

Giannini is actually the best thing in the movie; he looks lived-in, as opposed to spaced-out, ruffled by recognizable lusts, and I could feel the audience reacting gratefully to a funny little scene involving nothing more than Pazzi, a pay phone, and the jangle of loose change. So much of the surrounding drama is drummed up rather than toned down; the composer, Hans Zimmer, keeps forgetting to hit the pause button on his choric chanting, and, while lifeblood streams from a slit throat, the camera looms, not once but twice, as if nerving itself to lap. When Jonathan Demme, the director of "The Silence of the Lambs," showed us a dead body, he needed no more than a quick glance; what really gripped him was the flinching frown of Jodie Foster, as she saw the defilement done to another woman. Scott is more of a lingerer; without wishing to imply that he hangs out with serial murderers, I would say that he understands Hannibal better than he does Clarice. The brimming gore of the film is spilled not to upset or even spook us but purely in the spirit of aesthetic precision; that, at least, would gratify Dr. Lecter, and I wonder if both men might have been more at home not in the Florence of Dante but in the shadows of Caravaggio's Rome. To judge by Scott's record, he was the right man for Thomas Harris; they share an ability to fixate on disturbing detail while glossing over the frankly incredible. (Would an undisguised Lecter wander around a city teeming with American travellers? How do the F.B.I.'s Most Wanted pass through airports? Is Lecter really Clarice's Most Wanted, too?) If "Hannibal" falls short, that may be because Scott is still on a high from "Gladiator," which was better fitted to the swagger of his method; the luscious locations of the new picture, like the enormity of Lecter's ego, have misled him to treat as grand opera what Demme recognized as chamber music—intimate, insidious, and high-strung.

Still, this is the movie that people will pay to see in the coming weeks. I would not recommend it for a hot date, and, for those who have recently ordered pork chops, I am obliged to refer you to a sequence involving vast, hungry hogs, which have been trained by Mason Verger's henchmen in what is technically known as multi-tusking. (Did Harris or Scott see a 1981 thriller called "Green Ice," in which Ryan O'Neal watches a comrade being chomped to death by identical beasts?) It is followed shortly afterward by the interesting sight of Dr. Lecter at his most cerebral; I will add no more, except to say that chopped parsley gets a major supporting role. The result will make you either giggle or throw up; what it doesn't provide—what I missed in the entire, extravagant production—is the murmur of authentic dread. "The Silence of the Lambs," in Harris's imaginings, was a matchless example of provocative pulp, showing how a lower genre can outwit the highbrow and make serious headway into our bad dreams. "Hannibal" may be richer fare, sauced with velvety style by Ridley Scott, but only in passing does it taste like food for thought. ♦

BOOKS

CIVIL ACTIONS

Brown v. Board of Education and the limits of law.

BY LOUIS MENAND

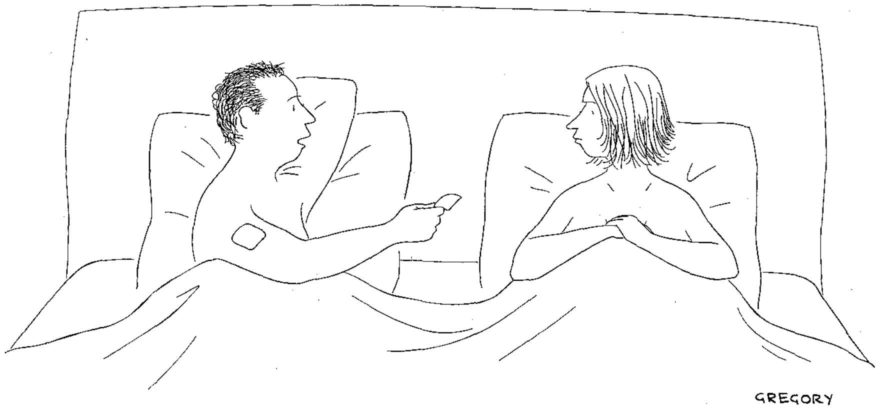
Kenneth B. Clark was born in 1914 in the Panama Canal Zone, grew up in Harlem, and attended Howard University, where he majored in psychology and where he met and married Mamie Phipps. Phipps was a math major, but Clark persuaded her to switch to psychology, and she wrote a paper, in her senior year, on the effects of race on the self-image of schoolchildren in Washington, D.C. Her husband found the results intriguing, and they began collaborating. They published their first paper on the subject in 1939. Fifteen years later, Clark's work was cited in one of the most famous footnotes in Supreme Court history: Footnote 11 of Chief Justice Earl Warren's opinion, for a unanimous Court, in Brown v. Board of Education, the case that declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. That decision and its consequences—some intended, many unimagined—is the subject of James T. Patterson's "Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy" (Oxford; $27.50).

Dorothy Counts, the first black student to attend Harding High School, in Charlotte, North Carolina, September 5, 1957.

AP WIDE WORLD

Brown was the first major decision of the Warren Court, and it remains, for most people, the very type of a Warren Court case: it trumps a democratically approved practice with a constitutional right few people knew existed. In 1952, when Brown first came before the Court, school segregation was mandated by the will of the electorate in seventeen states and had been practiced in the District of Columbia, under the stewardship of Congress, for almost ninety years. Four other states allowed segregation at the discretion of local school boards. The majority of voters in places where segregation was the law showed no inclination to end it, and neither did congressmen from places where it was not. The consensus was that race relations were a local matter, and that although states were entitled to ban segregation if they liked, there was nothing in the Constitution that compelled them to do so. The Warren Court, of course, found otherwise.

In 1952, Warren was still governor of California. He was appointed by Dwight Eisenhower to fill the vacancy left by the unexpected death of Chief Justice Fred Vinson, in October, 1953, and he was not confirmed by the Senate



"Patch?"

until March. The decision in Brown was announced in May. So there is a sense in which Warren lucked out by finding a landmark case already on his plate when he showed up for work. It gave him an immediate occasion to make his mark. But it is also probably true that without Warren there would have been no Brown, at least as we know it. Until he arrived and applied the charm for which he became renowned, the Court was split, and the decision might have gone either way. The Supreme Court, as the saying goes, has no army. This is why it produces written opinions rather than peremptory orders (and why its members wear robes and read their decisions from a pedestal): it has to persuade elected officials, through a combination of reason and mystique, to back its rules by force. Warren saw the importance of unanimity on a matter, the status of black people, over which the United States had once gone to war, and he stroked the brethren to achieve it.

What made Brown so hard? It wasn't just the politics. It was also the precedents. For more than a hundred years, courts had reviewed laws mandating segregation and had found, most of the time, no constitutional basis for invalidating them. We tend to think of laws stigmatizing black people as the more or less exclusive pathology of the Old South, but the first case to declare the legality of segregated schools was decided in Massachusetts. In Roberts v. City of Boston, in 1849, Judge Lemuel Shaw, one of the most distinguished jurists of his century, explained that although equality is splendid in principle, in actual fact people are differently placed and their rights are modified by their circumstances. We treat children differently from adults, he said, and no one objects. The Boston School Committee is similarly entitled to make different provisions for black schoolchildren and white schoolchildren.

Shaw's opinion was quoted prominently in the Supreme Court case that sealed the constitutionality of segregation for half a century, Plessy v. Ferguson, in 1896. Plessy held that requiring separate railroad cars for black passengers and white passengers did not violate the Constitution, since although the Fourteenth Amendment says that all persons are entitled to the "equal protection of the laws," separating people does not mean that they are being treated unequally. "We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority," the Court said. "If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it." The opinion was written by Henry Billings Brown, from Massachusetts. The sole dissent was by John Marshall Harlan, a former slaveholder from Kentucky. The retrospective notion that the South erected a Jim Crow society in defiance of the rest of white America is mistaken.

Brown combined lawsuits against school districts in Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. The burden of its various plaintiffs was to explain why the phrase "separate but equal" was an oxymoron. The man charged with masterminding this task was Thurgood Marshall. School integration was the great cause of Marshall's life. He had grown up in Baltimore, and although the public law school of his own state university was only a few blocks from where he lived, he could not attend it because it did not admit black students. Marshall went to Howard instead. In 1938, he became the lead attorney for the N.A.A.C.P. and began a remarkable and perilous career waging legal war against discrimination in dozens of cases across the South.

There were many fronts on which such a war could have been fought. Montgomery, Alabama, for example, had a law prohibiting a white man from playing checkers with a black man in public. Marshall believed, though, that schools were the key to ending segregation, partly because he thought that education was the path to social advancement for African-Americans, and partly because he thought that if blacks and whites mixed together as children they would be less susceptible to racial prejudice as adults. Marshall travelled around the South inspecting the conditions of segregated schools and found (not to anyone's surprise) that schools for black children were drastically inferior. In 1948-49, the average investment per student in Atlanta public schools was $570 for white children and $228.05 for black children. Similar disparities existed across the South.

This finding suggested a legal strategy that Marshall called Jim Crow Deluxe: accept separation but demand genuine equality. The reasoning was that it would be so expensive for Southern school districts to maintain dual school systems if they were equal in quality that they would be forced to integrate. The strategy had support within the N.A.A.C.P., but Marshall eventually rejected it, and he began finding and litigating the cases that would be consolidated in Brown. He was committed to getting a court to declare that separate facilities are inherently unequal. And this is where the Clarks' work proved useful.

That work was discovered by another N.A.A.C.P. lawyer, Robert Carter. Clark had bought four fifty-cent dolls at a five-and-ten on 125th Street, two pink and two brown. He and his wife ran experiments in which black children were asked to point to the doll they thought was "nice," the one they thought was was "bad," and the one they thought was most like themselves. The Clarks found that black children who attended segregated schools were more likely to choose the "white" doll as the "nice" doll and the "colored" doll as the "bad" one, and that many of the children picked the "white" doll as the one most like themselves. This seemed to Carter to refute the argument in Plessy that segregation does not stamp one race with the badge of inferiority. It also supported the claim that, because of the psychological damage caused by discrimination, black students in segregated schools were not getting an equal education. Although many of the lawyers brought in to consult with the N.A.A.C.P. found the idea of introducing the doll study as a legal argument risible, Marshall decided to use it.

It was the right decision: it gave Warren the inch of ground he needed to stand on in order to move aside the obstacle of Plessy. "To separate [black schoolchildren] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race," Warren said, "generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." Possibly the state of psychological knowledge in 1896 had been inadequate for the Court to realize this, he suggested, but it is "amply supported by modern authority." And he cited seven sociological and psychological studies; the Clarks' was the first.

In telling the story of Brown, Patterson mostly follows (with full acknowledgment) the standard and exhaustive history of the case, Richard Kluger's "Simple Justice." But "Simple Justice" was published in 1975, when the effects of Brown were just beginning to be understood; Patterson covers the progress of school desegregation in the quarter-century since. He is not, on the whole, encouraged. By most measures, public schools today are less integrated than they were ten years ago: since 1990, the percentage of a typical black student's classmates who are likely to be white has declined in every region of the country, and the gap between black students' test scores and white students' has been increasing in every area but science. What happened?

In the beginning, of course, there was resistance. When the Civil Rights Act was passed, ten years after Brown, only 1.17 per cent of black schoolchildren in the South attended public school with whites. After 1964, though, opposition in the South largely collapsed. By the 1972-73 school year, 46.3 per cent of black schoolchildren in the South were going to schools in which a majority of the students were white. The problem was with the rest of the country. Outside the South and border states, only 28.3 per cent of black schoolchildren attended majority-white schools. It turned out that there were many ways to end up with segregated schools.

Warren dismissed criticism of his reference to Clark and other social scientists ("It's a *footnote*," he said), but the citation was important, because it supported a conclusion, which the Court was not obliged to reach, that for education to be "equal" it had to be integrated. And in a series of cases following the Civil Rights Act—Green v. County School Board (1968), Alexander v. Holmes (1969), and Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Board of Education (1971)—the Court held essentially that states have a positive duty to integrate their schools. In Swann, the Court specifically approved busing as a means of doing this. It is a sign of the power of Brown that the opinion in Swann was written by Warren Burger, the man whom Richard Nixon, No. 1 public enemy of busing, chose to replace Earl Warren as Chief Justice.

As Burger pointed out, forty per cent of American schoolchildren took buses to school as a matter of course. But busing to achieve what became known as "racial balance" ("desegregation" has such an accusatory sound) has never been popular, and the image of little children being packed onto a bus came to symbolize the disastrous consequences of court-ordered social policy. John Ashcroft, the Attorney General-designate, built his political career in Missouri as an inflexible opponent of busing across district lines between St. Louis and the surrounding suburbs.

Patterson covers the legal and political story of busing and other desegregation policies with clarity and economy. The classic account of the cultural story is J. Anthony Lukas's "Common Ground," the saga of the busing crisis in Boston—the city where it all began, back in 1849. One of Lukas's ideas was that the busing issue was not a contest between two groups, white Americans and black Americans, so much as it was a contest between two ideals, equality and community. It was a peculiarity of the nineteen-sixties that these ideals came to be regarded as compatible and mutually reinforcing. Generally speaking, they are not.

Communities consist of like-minded people who wish to manage their own affairs. Communities are traditional and hierarchical, and their cultural ecology is extremely fragile. Equality, on the other hand, is a terrible swift sword, and there is almost no social practice that it cannot strike down as inherently invidious. Americans can contemplate a fresh example: the equal-protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was the instrument that the U.S. Supreme Court used last December to reverse the Florida Supreme Court's ruling in Bush v. Gore. The absence of a single standard for counting ballots, the majority explained, plus the exclusion of some counties from the recount process, violated the right of all Florida voters to equal treatment. (Of course, if this was so, then the election itself was invalid, a possibility that the Court somehow neglected to consider.) Then, having wielded this mighty weapon, the Court was quick to shove it back into its sheath. "Our consideration," the Court explained, "is limited to the present circumstances, for the problem of equal protection in election processes generally presents many complexities."

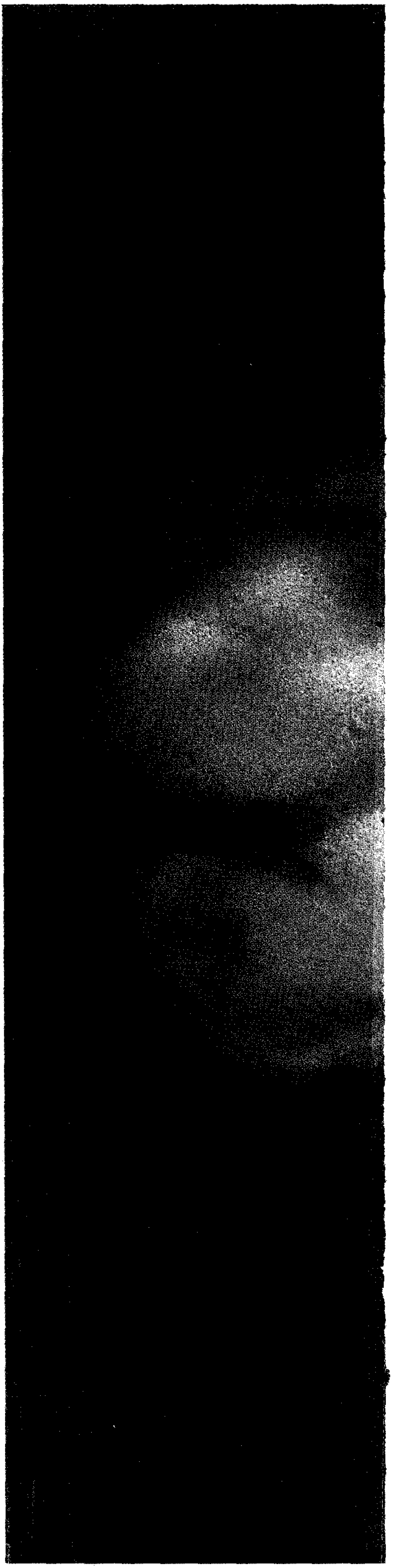
Desegregation presents complexities as well. Marshall, Clark, Warren, and the racial progressives of their time all believed that for citizens to be truly equal they must live side by side, sit in classrooms side by side, work side by side. They wished to erase race. It was an ambition that inspired many people and made a great difference, but, somewhere along the way, it reached a sort of cultural limit, a wall not of prejudice, exactly, or even of political will (though there remains enough of the former and not enough of the latter), but of the reality of how prepared people are to experiment with their own lives in the interest of progress toward a social goal.

Brown, the Montgomery bus boycott (which began the following year), and the 1964 Civil Rights Act were all integrationist accomplishments. In their spirit (and in response to rioting in urban neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Detroit, Newark, and other cities), the Johnson Administration embarked on a series of programs intended to give African-Americans a larger role ("maximum feasible participation" was the phrase) in running their own communities. This, Lukas believed, was where the wires got crossed. Once cities like Boston ceded control to groups in predominantly black neighborhoods, such as Roxbury, residents of predominantly white neighborhoods, such as South Boston, demanded, well, "equal treatment." The sanctity of school-district lines (in most states, a purely administrative convenience) got established. The "neighborhood school" became a cherished right. The consequences have been messy, and they have largely put an end to efforts to integrate schools by busing or other extraordinary means. The Court since Swann has usually taken the position that merely showing that schools are segregated does not trigger judicial scrutiny. Discrimination has to be proved.

As Patterson points out, the belief that black students cannot get a decent education unless there are white students in the classroom—the implication of the doll study—has always been disputed by some African-Americans. It is an area, for example, in which two figures not ordinarily thought of as soul brothers, Stokely Carmichael and Clarence Thomas, find common ground. "Integration," Carmichael wrote, with Charles V. Hamilton, in "Black Power," in 1967, because it assumes that black people are better off in the company of whites, "is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy." Thomas, in his concurring opinion in the 1995 school-desegregation case Missouri v. Jenkins, wrote, "It never ceases to amaze me that the courts are so willing to assume that anything that is predominantly black must be inferior." Carmichael was a proponent of group rights; Thomas is a proponent of individualism. But they represent two extremes of a widespread mistrust of pol-

AT THE GALLERIES

CLOUD ROSES



Wendy Mark's "Roses Like Clouds" began as all her monotypes do. She dabbed lacquer—red and cream and black—onto a square zinc plate, flicked the paint with brushes and bits of sponge, ran a hand roller over the works to blur lines and remove excess pigment, and finally achieved a sheer film of color. Then she laid the paint-glossed square on a one-ton press (a machine that looks like a clothes wringer), put a sheet of thick, damp paper over it, and slowly cranked it through until the shape of the square had sunk into the paper, leaving a Rorschach coat of tint behind.

Not long ago, Mark began assembling what she calls "chapbooks," persuading David St. John, Charles Simic, Mark Strand, and other poets to write verse to amplify her images—roses, clouds, and dollops that have a way of morphing into hillsides and trees. Her new book, "Six Landscapes, Four Pinballs, Two Roses, and a Car" (which accompanies a show at Lori Bookstein Fine Art, in New York), began as a collaboration with Strand, and evolved to include the writing of two poets, two essayists, and a novelist. "There's a correspondence between my work and theirs," the artist says. "Half romantic, half funny, and sometimes dark." Strand's poem "The Secret Rose" reveals the accord between painter and poet:

> A tall man at the corner turned and said,
> "That's not a rose, it's a car; just look
> how it sparkles in sunlight, how it rolls
> down the street. It's pure car, No rose at all."
> I yelled at him over the heads of others,
> "Not true, not true. It's a rose, a rose
> within a rose, a secret rose that says,
> 'I'm rose, pure rose, and cannot be
> accounted for.' "

Under Mark's brush, a rose is a cloud is a pinball. Familiar forms become interchangeable and yet unknowable: "secret."

—*Liesl Schillinger*

LORI BOOKSTEIN FINE ART

icies designed to bring black and white Americans together. They assume, as many Americans now seem to assume, that the main reason blacks and whites are not together more is that they don't want to be together.

It is natural to think of Thurgood Marshall and Martin Luther King, Jr., as soul brothers of the other kind—twin giants of the spirit of integration. They did agree on that much, but in most other respects they came from different planets. Patterson's book is a reminder that the civil-rights movement ran down two equal but separate tracks, as it were. Marshall was a pragmatist. When he travelled in the South, he sat in the back of the bus ("I have a back problem," he used to explain; "there's a big yellow streak running down it"), and he was famous for his ability to schmooze Southern sheriffs. His faith was entirely in the law. He spent years before his triumph in Brown patiently amassing a series of narrow rulings in segregation cases so that he would have some sort of body of case law at his disposal when he finally got to argue the big one.

Marshall was idealistic only in the extent to which he believed that a clean win in the Supreme Court would translate into genuine and irreversible social change. His reverence for the Constitution may have made him blind to the fact that most Americans speak a different moral language. When he was sitting on the Court himself, he grew bitter at what he regarded as the Burger and Rehnquist Courts' abandonment of the principle of desegregation. As it happened, Rehnquist had been a clerk for Justice Robert Jackson at the time that Brown was argued, and had written a memo explaining why Plessy should be upheld. (The memo turned up during Rehnquist's confirmation hearings. He explained, unconvincingly, that it simply reflected Jackson's own thinking.) In Marshall's final years on the Court (he retired in 1991, replaced by Thomas), he occasionally addressed his fellow-Justices as "Massa."

It is impossible to imagine King addressing anyone as "Massa." Irony was not in his repertoire. He was the enemy of pragmatism. That values are relative was an idea that he preached against continually. "If we are wrong," he cried in his great speech at the Holt Street Baptist Church, in 1955—the speech that launched the Montgomery bus boycott and, with it, his career—"then God Almighty is wrong." It is a very high standard of justice. But most of the African-Americans who sustained the boycott knew the New Testament a lot more intimately than they knew the Fourteenth Amendment. King's language appealed as well to many white Americans who held the federal government and its courts in conspicuous disregard but who were susceptible to a moral appeal based on Scripture. Marshall changed the law; King changed the country in places that the law does not touch. Without his crusade, the ruling in Brown might never have been enforced.

Marshall thought that the bus boycott was street theatre. He resented King's assumption that he was accomplishing something concrete by breaking the law in order to make a symbolic point. He resented as well the time and money that the N.A.A.C.P. was obliged to expend every time King's nonviolent resisters got hauled off to jail. "I think he was great, as a leader," Marshall later said of King. "As an organizer he wasn't worth shit. . . . All he did was to dump all his legal work on us, including the bills."

The conventional contrast between civil-rights leaders is the one between Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X: the apostle of integration and the demon of separatism. Spiritually, though, King and Malcolm were of the same type—charismatic, chiliastic, transcendentalist. Patterson is the author of a major history of postwar America called "Grand Expectations," and the phrase gets a serious workout in the new book. Its main theme is the naïveté of the people who thought, back in the fifties and early sixties, that Brown and its Warren Court progeny would solve the problem of discrimination all at once. I'm not sure how many people really did believe that, but it is surely also the case that King raised expectations far higher than Marshall did. Marshall had a strategy; King had a dream. Malcolm X called the 1963 March on Washington "the Farce on Washington." Marshall's response, when he was asked about the march (which he did not participate in), was more polite, but only marginally. "No comment," he said.

In the context of the early civil-rights movement, Marshall can seem the cautious, work-the-system incrementalist and King the uncompromising visionary. King was, indeed, more radical. He opposed the Vietnam War, for example, as another manifestation of racism; Marshall, who was Lyndon Johnson's solicitor general, supported the policy and resented King's opposition to it. But history has a way of turning prophecy into piety. Today, King's name is sometimes invoked to suggest that he would have been outraged by remedial policies, like busing or affirmative action, that categorize people by race. (King, of course, was an advocate of such policies.) Marshall, on the other hand, accomplished a revolution. He changed the meaning of the term "equality" by making it stand for more than legal neutrality. He wrote into constitutional law the premise that "equal" means "integrated," and he devoted the rest of his increasingly frustrated life to trying to get the Court and the country to live up to that premise.

One of the lessons of Brown is that most efforts to secure equality in this country sooner or later run into a form of de-facto segregation that no American court is likely to strike down: segregation by wealth. The Supreme Court, in the nineteen-seventies, drew the line at requiring school districts to be equally funded and at obliging states to pursue desegregation by busing students between cities and their suburbs. Those cases (San Antonio v. Rodriguez and Milliken v. Bradley) mark the end of the Brown era.

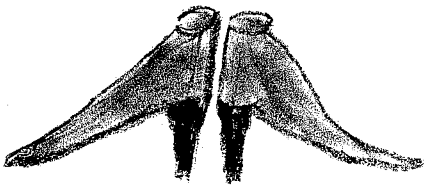
Another lesson of Brown, though, is that racial identity may be a lot harder to wash out than people hoped fifty years ago. Skin color carries a history, and it has proved more difficult to give up that history than to attempt to turn it to positive account. In the past decade, the official paradigm has changed, and there has arisen a renewed emphasis on (nonwhite) race, this time as a marker of cultural distinctiveness and group pride. Many of the old integrationists read this as a sign that their efforts have failed. In 1995, when Kenneth Clark was eighty-one, he was asked what he thought blacks should call themselves. "White" is what he said. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

An Hour Before Daylight: Memories of a Rural Boyhood, *by Jimmy Carter (Simon & Schuster; $26).* During the Depression, the workday on the Carter farm began before sunrise. But the title of this often touching memoir refers equally to the vast changes, moral and technological, that have obliterated the way of life the author remembers here. The attention to detail that sometimes got Carter into trouble when he was in the White House serves him well as a writer. He preaches no sermons. He aims simply to describe: to tell us what it looked, smelled, and felt like to grow up on a Southern farm that was more like a feudal village than like the modern South of traffic jams and CNN. The result is social and agricultural history as plain and honest as one of the tables the author makes in his workshop—an American classic.

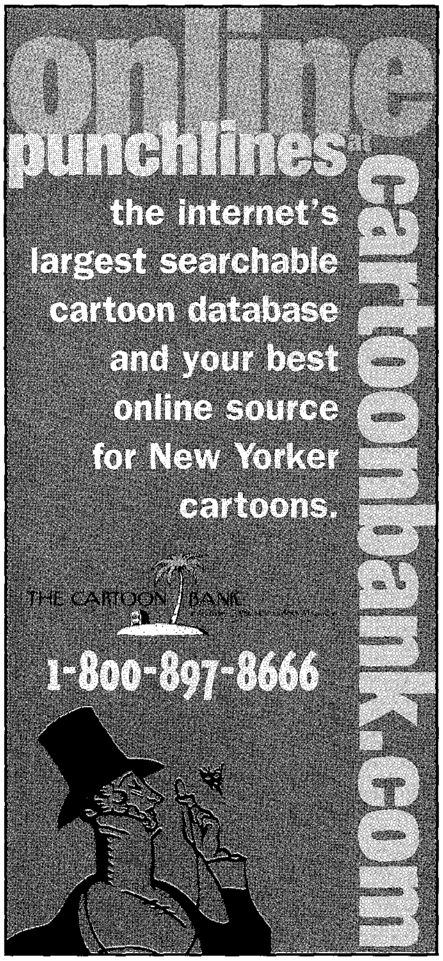
The Queen's Conjurer, *by Benjamin Woolley (Holt; $25).* John Dee, a gifted Renaissance scientist who advised Elizabeth I of England, worked in an era when science was a hodgepodge of alchemy and astrology. Rulers wanted wealth, power, and the ability to predict the future, and although Catholics and Protestants alike feared that new knowledge might breed heresy, they nonetheless sought spectacular results. Dee, who improved navigation and cryptography, shared other intellectuals' hope that Copernicus' theory of a heliocentric universe would provide a definitive cosmology, with planets and angels in their proper places. In later life, he suffered in pride and pocket after lending his celebrity to a con man who claimed to be in touch with heavenly spirits, but no disappointment soured his earnest dedication.

Tinkering with Eden, *by Kim Todd (Norton; $27.95).* The pigeons fluttering in public spaces, nutria in Southern swamps, gypsy moths across New England—all these are the thriving, abundant relics of abandoned experiments, most of them well meant. Todd considers what these proliferations reveal about our vision of nature and our place within it, and the ways in which good intentions have run headlong against the narrow logic of nature, leading to tragic conclusions.



When I Lived in Modern Times, *by Linda Grant (Dutton; $23.95).* Evelyn Sert is seeking a utopian—and Jewish—modernity when she makes her way, after the Blitz and her mother's death, from London to the British protectorate of Palestine to help found a Jewish state. At the kibbutz where this attractive young intellectual first alights, her skills as a hairdresser and aspiring avant-garde artist are not in great demand, but she soon finds work in Tel Aviv, a city built on Bauhaus principles. She also falls in love with a man ready to expunge the past through violence. In this British novel (which has won England's prestigious Orange Prize), Grant explores the convergence of personal identity and political history; the result is a world in which to be a Jew is to be alien—a view that one hopes will be alien to most Americans, Jewish and not.

The Body Artist, *by Don DeLillo (Scribners; $22).* Last time out, DeLillo delivered "Underworld," a leviathan of a novel that made grand pronouncements about postwar America; here he scales back in every way, offering a slim ghost story. A young widow discovers that a dishevelled, vaguely autistic man has somehow taken up residence in her spare room—and that her dead husband's spirit may or may not be inhabiting her new boarder. This is a fertile premise—the novel plays with questions of identity, presence, ritual, memory, and sanity, and uses those questions to investigate the larger mystery of death—but the book's brevity forces DeLillo to treat his themes sketchily, and at times with an uncharacteristic sentimentality.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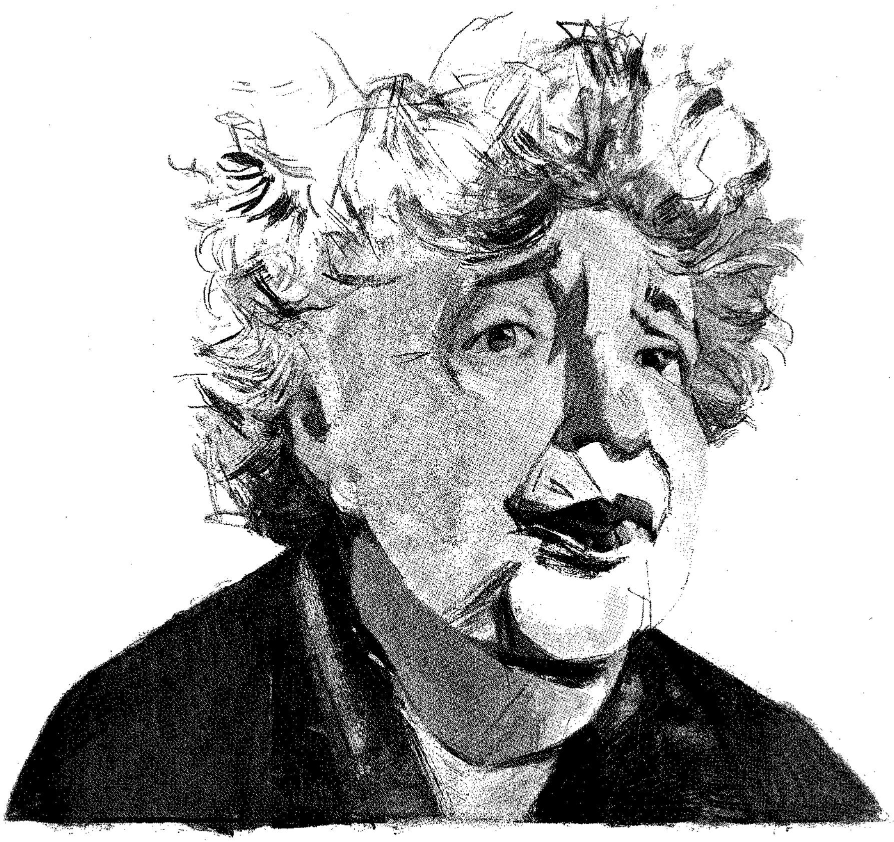
BOOKS

STONEWALLING TOFFS

In a new novel, Muriel Spark examines an old scandal.

BY JOHN UPDIKE



Spark, in her ninth decade, has produced one of her best works.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Dr. Hildegard Wolf, a contemporary, unlicensed Paris psychiatrist, who was formerly a fraudulent stigmatic and miracle healer in Bavaria called Beate Pappenheim, and whose unusual psychiatric method commences with her talking about herself while the patient patiently listens, counts among her loyal clientele two gentlemen who both claim to be Lord Lucan, the fugitive English earl who disappeared from London on the night of November 7, 1974, having evidently battered to death a nanny whom he mistook for his wife. Upon this implausible—indeed, preposterous—premise, Muriel Spark builds a strangely gripping and gnomically illuminating short novel, "Aiding and Abetting" (Doubleday; $21). Lord Lucan, a Note to Readers emphasizes, is or was an actual personage, who "has been 'sighted' in numerous parts of the world, predominantly central Africa." He was officially declared dead in 1999, though his body has never been found. In a sentence of typical aplomb, Spark assures the reader:

> What we know about "Lucky" Lucan, his words, his habits, his attitudes to people and to life, from his friends, photographs and police records, I have absorbed creatively, and metamorphosed into what I have written.

She additionally confides, "The parallel 'story' of a fake stigmatic woman is also based on fact."

Dame Muriel, it would seem, has been mulling the old scandal of Lord Lucan for some time. The need to consider a real event, with its much reported facts and lingering mysteries, gives this novel a less peremptory texture than she has accustomed us to; the figure of Lord Lucan deepens and complicates, as does the nature of the evil credited to him. Spark focusses upon those who, in the immediate wake of the murder and for, possibly, decades thereafter, helped the murderer escape and supplied him with funds. After putting his inadvertent victim's bloody body in a mail sack, Lucan assaulted his intended victim, his wife, with the same "length of lead piping, specially prepared to deaden the thuds"; she escaped, with severe head wounds, to the shelter of a nearby pub. Why wasn't a criminal so blatant and clumsy in his crimes quickly apprehended? A slight acquaintance of Lucan's, Dr. Joseph Murray, expresses this view twenty-five years later:

> The police were slow. The friends who aided and abetted Lucan ran rings around the police. Those police were used to low-life criminals from the streets and from the rooming houses of Mayfair and Soho. Clever sharpsters, they were unnerved by the stonewalling toffs; they were not exactly abject, not at all. But they were hesitant, out of their depth.

The aiders and abetters acted, Murray thinks, out of a class loyalty that has become obsolete: "We are not the same people as we were a quarter of a century ago. . . . We cannot afford to be snobs. Since Lucan's day, snobs have been greatly emarginated." Old-fashioned snobbery empowered Lucan in his ill-planned crime: "It was not only that he was a member of the aristocracy, a prominent upper-class fellow, it was that he had pitched his life and all his living arrangements to that proposition. His proposition was: I am a seventh Earl, I am an aristocrat, therefore I can do what I like, I am untouchable." Later in the novel, the author adds to this analysis the fatalist psychology of a compulsive, self-ruinous gambler:

> Lucky Lucan believed in destiny. By virtue of destiny he was an earl. His wife had been destined to die, according to his mad calculation. It was the madness of a gambler. . . . His sense of destiny obliterated the constant, well-known fact that the gambler loses and the bookie, the croupier or whoever, always wins in the end.

The novel's other characters, who proliferate as the plot develops ever newer kinks, are all in the grip of, if not murderous madness, obsessions and tics that snap them back and forth between Paris and London and Scotland and Mexico and darkest central Africa, where a fate as comically lurid as anything in Waugh (Evelyn) or Burroughs (William and Edgar Rice) puts the disturbances to rest, leaving the environment, in the book's chilly last words, "cleaner than usual." Ever since her first published, prize-winning short story, "The Seraph and the Zambesi," the dark magic of Africa has held for Spark an affinity with the dark magic of Catholicism, to which she is an unabashed, if antinomian, convert. "Beliefs are essential," one character admits, having asserted that "witch men can cure." So can fake stigmatics, who smear their hands and feet with their own menstrual blood. "What else," it is asked, "should a woman of imagination do with her menstrual blood?" Blood is Spark's dominant metaphor in "Aiding and Abetting": one pagan African explains, "Christians worship the Lamb, unlike the Hindus who worship the Cow. They wash in the blood of a lamb," and the other responds, "I don't know about that. I should think it was a sticky way to be washed."

Sex, too, can be sticky, and reeks of bewitchment. In this novel, Dr. Murray and a young lady named Lacey repeatedly just miss the object of their concerted search, as if by design: "Even a simple manhunt had been so peripheral to their love affair that they had let him slip time and again, and enjoyed it." If the novel has a hero, it is Hildegard's burly lover Jean-Pierre Roget, a resourceful "metal- and wood-worker" equal to all repairs. He is impervious to the machinations of the two Lord Lucans and unperturbed by Hildegard's rebuffs—she is one of Spark's bedevilled heroines, too harried to be considerate. Many puzzle pieces breezily fly together to make the quick-moving plot, but they interlock snugly. In her ninth decade, Spark has produced one of the best of her sui-generis novels, to rank with "The Comforters," "The Bachelors," "Memento Mori," "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie," "The Driver's Seat," "The Abbess of Crewe," and "Loitering with Intent."

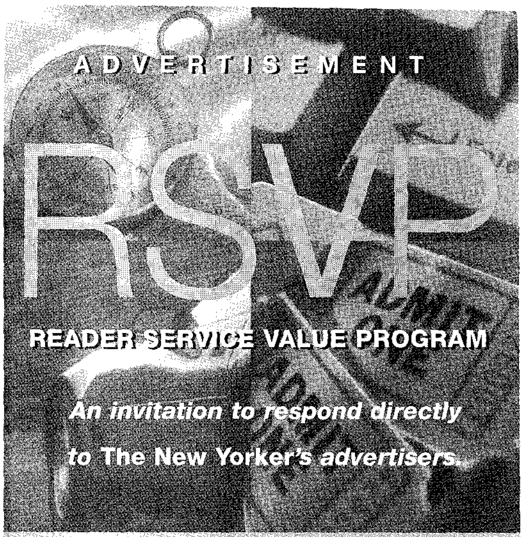
Her language deserves an admiring word. Never ornate, it grows simpler. Has any writer since Hemingway placed more faith in the simple declarative sentence, the plain Anglo-Saxon noun? Hemingway's style sometimes gives the impression of striking a pose, whereas Spark's appears to be merely getting on with it, brushing aside everything she might say but doesn't care to. Decades of living in Italy may have rusted, or antiqued, her English idiom. We read that Lord Lucan "was a snob from his deepest gust"; that he "flourished a fly swat"; that "he stood up and out into the aisle to see them more clear"; that "DNA profiles and other new scientific perforations of bland surfaces were the enemy now." Of a minor character, as she picks up the telephone, we read, " 'Yes, speaking,' said the lady in the English tongue." The prose tends to be strict and briskly instructive. With Euclidean concision it delivers Hildegard's curious life story:

> She grew up on the pig farm. The sisters and brothers eventually married and went to live each in a house not far away. They continued in the pig business. Hildegard (then Beate) grew up, with all them around, among the pigs. She went to school, was clever. She fought herself free from her home. She found Heinrich. She made blood-money.

Perhaps, as Spark ages, her gnarly Scots roots thrust up through the ground of her long Continental residence. Certainly her prose is lifted by a trip that her lovers, Joe and Lacey, take to Caithness, in northern Scotland:

> The great lovely steep hills were all around them. The feeling of northern nature, a whole geography minding very much its own business, cautious, alien, cold and haughty, began here. The sky rolled darkly amid patches of white light. On they drove, north, north.

Unlike Ivy Compton-Burnett's clipped prose, which seemed fit only for cranky, quibbling people pent up in Victorian parlors, Spark's can encompass, if curtly, whatever arises before it—the light-struck landscape without, the bloody turns within. ♦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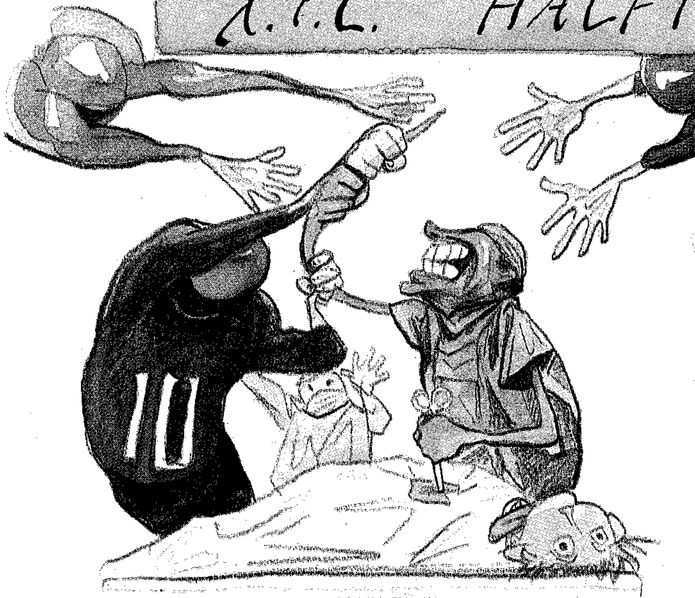

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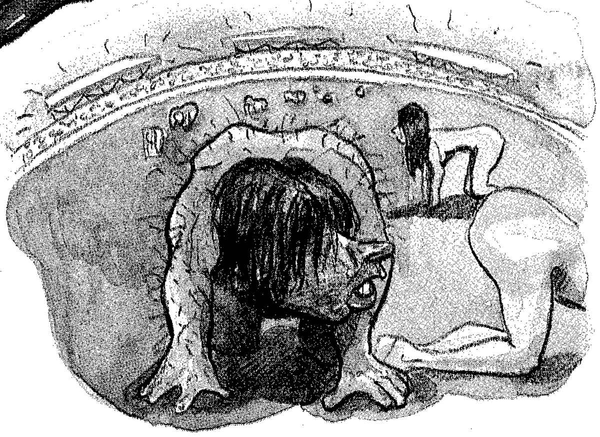
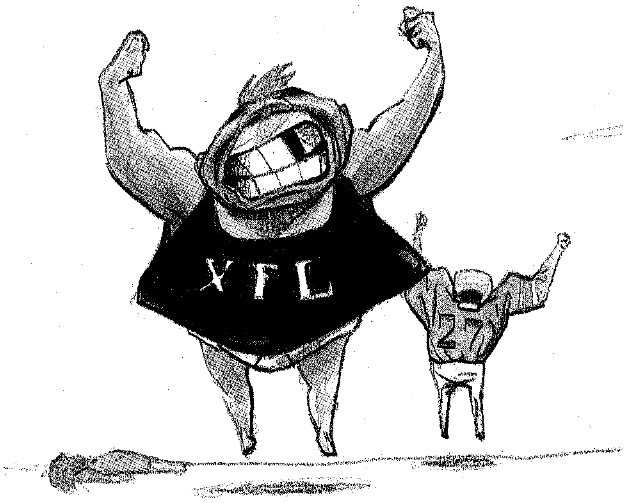


YOU'RE SUCH AN ANIMAL!

PLAYERS AND CHEERLEADERS CRAWL ABOUT, ROOTING.



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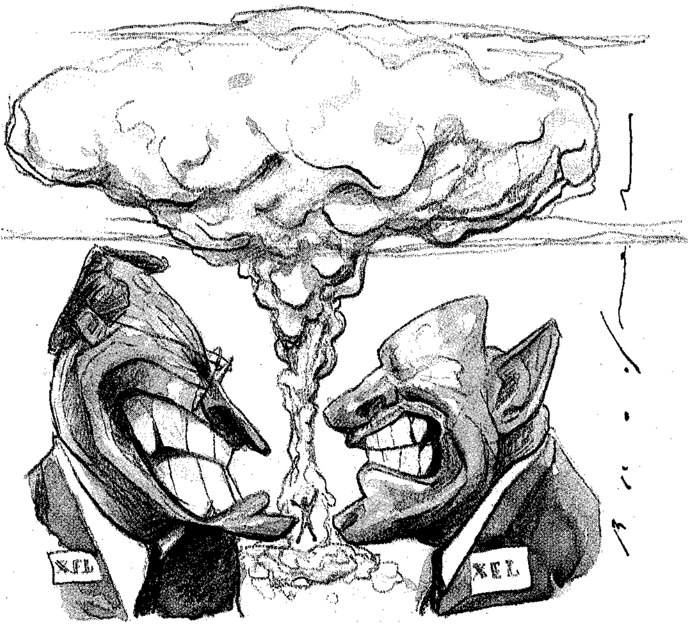

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